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Morning India

USSS shoots armed man near White House

MI News Service, Washington: An armed man believed to be travelling from Indiana was shot by US Secret Service agents near the White House after a confrontation early Sunday, according to authorities.

No one else was injured in the shooting that happened around midnight about a block from the White House, according to a Secret Service statement. President Donald Trump was in Florida at the time of the shooting.

The Secret Service received information from local police about an alleged "suicidal individual" who was travelling from Indiana and found the man's car and a person matching his description nearby.

"As officers approached, the individual brandished a firearm and an armed confrontation ensued, during which shots were fired by our personnel," the Secret Service said in a statement. The man was hospitalised. The Secret Service said his condition was "unknown".

The Metropolitan Police Department will investigate because the shooting involved law enforcement officers. A message left Sunday for the police department wasn't immediately returned.

VP Jagdeep Dhankhar gets admitted at AIIMS with chest pain

MI News Service, New Delhi: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the AIIMS here early Sunday after complaining of uneasiness and chest pain, sources said.

The 73-year-old was taken to the hospital.

Dhankhar was admitted to the Critical Care Unit (CCU) under Dr Rajiv Narang, Head of Department of Cardiology at AIIMS.

He is stable and under observation, a source said, adding a group of doctors is monitoring his condition. Union Health Minister J P Nadda visited AIIMS to enquire about Dhankhar's condition.

ED confiscates Rs 14 Cr jet that flew Ponzi scam boss

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized a business jet parked at the Hyderabad airport as part of a money-laundering probe against a Hyderabad-based company and its promoters who allegedly cheated investors in a 850-crore Ponzi scam, sources said on Saturday.

The jet (Hawker 800A), worth around 14 crore, was allegedly used by Falcon Group chairman and managing director and prime accused Amar Deep Kumar to flee India on January 22. The ED

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A view of the snow clad Gulmarg Ski Resort as it gears up to host 5th edition of Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) to boost adventure sports & tourism, on Sunday.

USA wants 'large' & 'grand' bilateral trade agreement with India



MI News Service, Washington/New Delhi: The USA is quite clearly looking forward to a "large" and "grand" bilateral trade agreement while seeking opening the agriculture sector for American businesses, saying "it just can not stay closed".

This will be an important agreement which India will negotiate with a developed economy. Talks are on with two other developed markets - the UK and the European Union (EU).

It is essential to understand why the USA is keen on India's agriculture sector. A list of Q & As (questions and answers) to explain these issues:

Normally, in a trade pact, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs du-

ties on maximum number of goods traded between them. However, the US seeks to negotiate a comprehensive trade agreement covering all key aspects, rather than engaging in sector-specific discussions.

Beyond tariff reductions, the US may like to include provisions on government procurement, agricultural subsidies, patent law relaxation, and unrestricted data flows' issues that India has largely opposed.

Agriculture in India is not just an economic activity but a way of life, supporting over 700 million people. India is largely self-sufficient in food production, whereas for the US, agriculture is a major trade industry.

As per a report, in

2024, US agricultural exports stood at USD 176 billion, accounting for about 10 per cent of its total merchandise exports. With large-scale mechanized farming and heavy government subsidies, the US and other developed countries view India as a lucrative market to expand their exports. Unlike India, where farming is linked to livelihoods, the US sees agriculture primarily as a trade and market access issue.

India's agriculture sector is currently protected by moderate to high tariffs to shield domestic farmers from unfair competition. Opening up a sector means reducing import curbs and duty.

Agriculture and allied activities such as animal husbandry form the backbone of India's rural econ-

omy, providing employment to over 700 million people. Unlike in developed economies where agriculture is highly mechanized and corporatized, in India, it is a livelihood issue, making any move to liberalize the sector highly sensitive.

According to GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava, opening up agriculture to heavily subsidized foreign imports would mean an influx of cheap food products, severely impacting Indian farmers' incomes and livelihoods. "Over 90 per cent of global food trade is controlled by five multinational corporations that have historically used predatory pricing strategies. If India reduces protection, domestic

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J&K: Security forces recover 3 bodies from forest in Kathua

MI News Service, Srinagar: Bodies of a teenager and his two relatives were recovered from a forest in Billaوار in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district on Saturday, three days after they went missing while returning from a wedding, with the BJP claiming the involvement of militants in the deaths.

The bodies of Varun Singh, 14, his uncle Yogesh Singh, 32, and maternal uncle Darshan Singh, 40, were spotted near a water body near Lohai Malhar by drones during a joint search operation by police and the army.

BJP legislator R.S. Pathia said the trio, who hailed from two villages in Billaوار, appeared to have been killed by militants.



Two people had died under similar conditions in the area on February 18. All the five victims are Hindus.

Villagers in Billaوار blame the deaths on militants who have been hiding in the forests in Kathua for months and have carried out a series of attacks on security forces in the last one year.

Billaوار's BJP MLA Satish Sharma had raised the issue of three missing civilians in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Friday. "I want to inform you about the three missing civilians. We seek answers from the government," he had said. An official said that the cause of their death would be

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India condemns vandalism at Hindu temple in California

MI News Service, New Delhi/California: India on Sunday strongly condemned an incident of vandalism at a Hindu temple in California's Chino Hills and demanded "stringent action" against those involved.

New Delhi also called for adequate security to the places of worship in view of the incident.

"We have seen reports regarding the vandalism at a Hindu temple in Chino Hills, California. We con-

demn such despicable acts in the strongest terms," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We call upon the local law enforcement authorities to take stringent action against those responsible for these acts, and also ensure adequate security to places of worship," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to media queries on the incident.

The Bochasanwasi Ak-

shar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) on Saturday said that Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chino Hills faced desecration.

"In the face of another Mandir desecration, this time in Chino Hills, CA, the Hindu community stands steadfast against hate. Together with the community in Chino Hills and Southern California, we will never let hate take root," the BAPS Public Affairs posted on X.

Bird flu outbreak in Bokaro

MI News Service, Bokaro: A bird flu outbreak has been reported in Jharkhand's Bokaro district, roughly a month after the disease led to the culling of 5,500 birds in Ranchi, an official said on Sunday.

The outbreak, caused by the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, was officially confirmed on March 7, when the Centre issued a letter to the chief secretary of Jharkhand, he said.

The outbreak was traced to a government poultry farm in Bokaro's Sector 12, where around 250 birds have already died.

The Bokaro administration on Saturday culled 46 birds and destroyed 506 eggs after the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying asked the state to take all measures to contain the spread of bird flu, including declaration of infected and surveillance areas, restricting access to the affected premises and culling of birds.

"Forty-six birds remaining at the farm were culled, and 506 eggs and 1,717 kg of poultry feed were destroyed. The entire farm was sanitised," Bokaro Animal Husbandry Officer Dr Manoj Mani told.

The area within the 1-km radius of the

epicentre has been declared as an affected zone and birds within the area will be culled, he said.

"Additionally, a 10-km radius has been designated as a surveillance zone, where the sale and purchase of poultry has been prohibited. An awareness campaign will begin today," Mani added.

Dr Anil Kumar Sinha, in-charge of the government poultry farm, stated that the first deaths were reported on February 20.

"Twelve birds died on February 23, and we sent the initial samples to Ranchi on February 25 and to Kolkata on February 27. Following instructions from the Kolkata-based laboratory, we sent the sample to a Bhopal-based lab on March 5," he said.

The ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal confirmed the presence of H5N1 on March 7. Sinha noted that of the 300 birds at the farm, around 250 died within 15 days.

Earlier in February, a bird flu outbreak was reported at a poultry farm at Birs Agriculture University (BAU) in Ranchi, where 5,488 birds were culled.

Water quality during Mahakumbh in Prayagraj fit for bathing: CPCB

MI News Service, Prayagraj: A new report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) submitted to the National Green Tribunal has said that as per statistical analysis, the water quality during the recently-concluded Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj was fit for bathing.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report said the statistical analysis was necessitated because of "variability of data" in the samples collected from the same locations across different dates and on different locations on the same day, because of which these did not reflect the "overall river water quality throughout the river stretch".

The report dated February 28 and uploaded on the tribunal's website on March 7 said the board had conducted water monitoring twice a week from January 12 onwards, including on auspicious bathing days, at five locations on Ganga river and two locations on Yamuna river.

"There is a significant variability in the values on various parameters, viz pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and fecal coliform count (FC) for the samples taken from the same location on different dates. The values of the afore-mentioned parameters also vary at different locations for the samples collected on the same day," the report said.

The DO or the amount of oxygen in water, BOD, which measures the amount of oxygen needed to break down organic matter in water, and FC, a marker of sewage contamination, are key indicators of water quality.



The report said that an expert committee examined the issue of "variability in data" and said that "the data represents a snapshot of water quality at a specific location and time and may vary significantly depending upon factors such as upstream anthropogenic activities (human actions), rate of flow, depth of sampling, time of sampling, river current and mixing of currents, sampling location and such other multiple factors".

"As a result, these values reflect water quality parameters at the exact time and place from where these water samples were collected, and may not fully represent the overall characteristics of the river, therefore, not necessarily reflecting the overall river water quality throughout the river stretch," it said.

The report also said that because of the variability, a statistical analysis of water quality data of various monitoring locations for the key parameters was undertaken from January 12 to February 22 at 10 locations of "mass bathing" and that 20 rounds of monitoring were done.

"It is submitted that as per the above-mentioned statistical analysis, the median value (central tendency of the data) of pH, DO, BOD and FC for

the monitored stretches is within the respective criteria/permissible limits," the report noted.

According to the report, the median value for FC was 1,400 as compared to the permissible limit of 2,500 units per 100 ml, while the DO was 8.7 vis-a-vis the stipulated norm of being greater than 5 milligram per litre, and the BOD was 2.56 against the stipulated limit of less than or equal to 3 mg per litre.

On February 17, the CPCB had informed the tribunal through a report that various locations in Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh were not conforming to the primary water quality for bathing with respect to the level of faecal coliform.

"The river water quality was not conforming to the primary water quality for bathing with respect to faecal coliform at all the monitored locations on various occasions.

"A large number of people bathe in the river at Prayagraj during the Maha Kumbh Mela, including on auspicious bathing days, which eventually leads to an increase in faecal concentration," the report had said.

At present, the matter has been posted for hearing on April 7.

Advocate Saurabh Tiwari appeared for the petitioner in the case.

Still marginalized: The struggles of specially-abled individuals in society



MI News Service : In an era of progress and inclusion, specially-abled individuals continue to struggle for acceptance and support. Their challenges often remain unnoticed, making them an overlooked section of society. A tragic incident in Behala's Shakuntala Park last Friday highlighted the difficulties faced by families of children with autism. A 56-year-old man, Swajan Das, ended his life along with his autistic daughter, Sreeja. Concerned about his daughter's future, the family had been battling anxiety and uncertainty for years, ultimately lead-

ing to this heartbreaking decision. According to central government data, the number of children diagnosed with autism has been steadily rising over the past two to nine years. Currently, around 1.5% of children in India are affected by autism, while in West Bengal, 176 children have been diagnosed with the condition. Psychologists emphasize that emotional support and family involvement play a crucial role in the well-being of autistic individuals. Keeping this in mind, the Matrimission & Mandir Seva Trust in Saguna, Kalyani, is constructing a residential facility on a

15-katha plot to provide a safe and supportive environment for autistic children and their parents. Initially, the facility will include 24 residential units, along with amenities such as a gym, swimming pool, and a specialized school for children with autism. Additionally, a four-bed ICU-equipped hospital will be available for medical emergencies. Swami Sarveswarananda Puri, the head of the Mandir Seva Trust, explained the vision behind this initiative: "We often worship idols made of stone or clay in search of God, but these children are the

true embodiment of divinity. Their parents constantly worry about what will happen to them in their absence. That's why we have taken up this initiative—to ensure a secure future for these children. Even if their parents are no longer there, our mission will take care of them." This project marks the first time in West Bengal that a religious institution has taken up a housing initiative for specially-abled individuals. Many believe it will help alleviate the emotional distress of families caring for autistic children. Subir Chakraborty, the father of 12-year-old Sharmistha, an autistic child, expressed his relief at the initiative: "Knowing there will be a place where my daughter is cared for gives me peace of mind. This project is a ray of hope for many parents like me." With such efforts, society is slowly moving toward a more inclusive future—one where individuals with special needs are not left behind but embraced with dignity and care.

The "Bengal Women's Encouragement Award 2025"

MI News Service : The "Bengal Women's Encouragement Award 2025" was held at the Kolkata Press Club on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8th March 2025, on behalf of the Ashraya Social Welfare and Culture Foundation, which is associated with various kind of social programs. This award has been given to 10 exceptional women from various professions who have established themselves in the society through their dedication and hard work. Although women are now established in many fields, incidents of violence against women, rape, and brutal murders are still seen in society. In protest against this, this event was organized by the special initiative of the founder of the 'Ashraya' NGO and advocate Shri Shantanu Sinha, to shed light on the issue of women's safety at the workplace. Special guests were present at the event to applaud this initiative including State Transport Minister of West Bengal Shri Snehasis Chakraborty,



Hon'ble Chairperson of West Bengal Child Rights Protection Commission Smt. Tulika Das, IPS Shanti Das, Advocate Prasun Kumar Dutta, Eminent Singer Vaswati Dutta and Social Activist Nandini Bhattacharya. Those are honored from this stage, they were social activist Smt. Mahasweta Mukherjee, Advocate Debyani Ghosh, Journalist Debashree Mukherjee, Acid Survivor Jhuma Santra, Smt Gargi Poddar, Smt Swapna Saha, Smt Samata Saha Kar, Smt Sangeeta Modak, Shilpa Mukherjee and others. In his speech,

the founder of the said organization said that even though we are celebrating the 50th International Women's Day but we are still somewhat behind in providing protection to women in society. Therefore, through his organization, he has tried to highlight the issue of women's safety in the society by giving special importance to this day by honoring women associated with various professions, through which this honor will encourage all women in the future to become self-reliant and establish themselves in society.

The curious case of odd-shaped potatoes: Arambagh, Hooghly farmers struggle to find buyers

MI News Service, Hooghly: Many farmers in Arambagh, Hooghly, are faced with a curious crisis — their odd-shaped potatoes are putting off buyers.

These farmers, who have grown the crop on at least 150 bighas, are now stuck with mountains of unusually shaped potatoes that resemble "ginger or clay dolls".

"I have grown potatoes on 12 bighas, and the entire harvest is of a weird variety that I had never seen in my 45-year-old career as a farmer. No buyer wants to purchase them because they resemble clay dolls or large pieces of ginger," said Asit Sarkar, a potato farmer from Malaypur area in Arambagh.

"All the produce is stockpiled in the field and I don't know how I will bear this huge loss," the 71-year-old added.

A farmer typically spends around 35,000 to cultivate potatoes on one bigha of land. Sarkar's total loss therefore comes to around 4,00,000.

Usually, a farmer can produce 45-50 quintals of potatoes on one bigha. For someone cultivating potatoes on 10 bighas, the total production is around 500 quintals.

Many farmers in Malaypur I and II gram panchayat, such as Mintu Das and Sheikh Mukul, are facing a similar predicament. Local sources said around 180 farmers were affected, but the agriculture department is yet to arrive at an estimate.

"Even we are afraid to eat these potatoes because we don't know if they might affect our health. We had never before in our lives seen potatoes of such strange size and shape," Das said.

Bengal agriculture marketing minister Becharam Manna said he had no idea about the crisis. "I will certainly look into the allegations of the farmers and get details," he said.

Several affected farmers said they had bought the potato seeds from a local trader, Aditya Dutta, who had claimed these were the high-yield Jyoti variety, sourced from Punjab.

"After harvesting these potatoes, we approached the trader and demanded compensation. He told us he had contacted the supplier of the seeds in Punjab and that the company officials would visit Hooghly soon," said a farmer who had cultivated these potatoes on three bighas.

A senior agriculture department official in Hooghly said the authorities had so far identified around 100 bighas that had yielded the unusual potatoes and would continue the survey to assess the total impact and the number of affected farmers.

"Although this is not the department's fault as the farmers had purchased seeds from a private trader, we have asked the trader to contact his supplier in Punjab and request compensation for the farmers — at least for the production costs," the official said. The office of the deputy director of agriculture in Hooghly has sent samples of the potato to the Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya to identify the cause of their strange shape and size.

"We believe the issue stems from the seeds. However, we need to determine whether the problem lies solely in their unusual size or if there is any contamination," an agriculture department official said.

Meridian Mist Hotel & Resort Unveils 'Jagannatham', Puri's Newest Luxury Beachside Retreat

MI News Service, Kolkata: 9th March, 2025 Jagannatham, an upcoming luxury resort in Puri under the banner of Meridian Mist Hotel & Resort, was unveiled at an exclusive pre-launch press conference held today in Kolkata.

The highlight of the event was the esteemed presence of Daitapati Shri Bhabani Das Maharaj, Chief Priest of Jagannath Temple, Puri, who shared insights into the resort's inherent connection with Puri's spiritual, cultural, and historical heritage by virtue of its location.

"Puri is not just a destination; it is a sacred abode where divinity meets the ocean. Jagannatham by Meridian Mist Hotel & Resort beautifully captures this essence by blending spiritual serenity with modern luxury. It will offer pilgrims and



travellers a place of peace, comfort and cultural richness", said Daitapati Shri Bhabani Das Maharaj speaking on the occasion.

Nestled along the panoramic Puri coastline, Jagannatham promises an enchanting blend of opulence and tranquillity. Designed to offer an unforgettable experience to every guest, the resort offers Studio and Deluxe

Cottages equipped with smart features, a luxurious spa, direct beach access, and personalised hospitality.

Jagannatham also has options of a range of recreational and wellness amenities, including jogging track, tennis court, amphitheatre and dedicated spaces for leisure and fitness. With its perfect blend of luxury and exceptional offerings, Ja-

gannatham is poised to become a premier destination for spiritual retreats, destination weddings, and luxury get-aways.

The unveiling of Jagannatham marks a significant milestone for Meridian Mist Hotel & Resort, redefining luxury hospitality in Puri, the sacred abode of Lord Jagannath. Seamlessly blending spiritual tranquillity with modern comforts, the resort is set to welcome both pilgrims seeking peace, as well as tourists and business travellers craving refined comfort.

With sophisticated architecture and design, world-class amenities, and deep-rooted connection to Puri's rich heritage and history, Jagannatham promises to be more than just a destination but an experience where divinity and elegance coexist.

Housing grants paid to 64 flood-hit families in Teesta Bazar area of Kalimpong

MI News Service, Darjeeling: The Kalimpong district administration and the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) distributed housing grants to 64 flood-hit families in the Teesta Bazar area of Kalimpong on Saturday.

Their homes were washed away or damaged during the flood in the Teesta in October 2023 in the wake of the glacial lake outburst flood in South Lhonak Lake, Sikkim.

On Saturday, a function was organised at the community hall in Teesta Bazar, located around 50 kilometres away from here. At the event, Sekhar Chaudhary, the additional district magistrate of Kalimpong, Sinora Namchu, an executive member of the GTA, and others handed over the grants to the affected families.

"After the flood, the district administration took the initiative with the GTA to compensate the affected families. So far, around 2.38 crore has been distributed among 434 (including today's 64) families," said Sangmit Lepcha, the pradhan (chief) of the Teesta gram panchayat.

After the natural disaster which affected areas like Krishnagram, Mell and Teesta Bazar in Kalimpong district, the administration and the GTA conducted a survey to identify families who turned homeless and also those whose houses were partially damaged.

In due course, funds were allocated to compensate the victims. "Those who lost their houses were paid a grant of 75,000 while those whose houses got partially damaged were paid 5,000," said a source.

Bishal Rai, a member of the Teesta disaster management committee, said among the families which got the assistance, around 90 percent have lost their houses.

"The GTA has carried out repairs in some of the houses which got partly damaged. After the flash flood, the GTA also provided temporary shelter to the families and have even paid house rents to some families for six months," said Rai.

Sources said that the Kalimpong district administration has planned a fresh survey to find out whether any affected family has been left out of the list of people eligible for the financial assistance.



Today, The Women's Group of Hemophilia Society- Durgapur Chapter celebrated International Women's Day 2025, to honour the women for their incredible contributions and dedication towards the society at our own premises. The following dignitaries graced the program . 1) Dr. Ananya Mukherjee, Dy. CMOH, Paschim Bardhaman, Govt. Of West Bengal 2) Miss Sushmita Nath, Counsellor, NHM of NRS Hospital, Kolkata, Govt. Of West Bengal 3) Dr. Ipsita Nag, Sr. Consultant, Blood Bank & Transfusion medicine, The Mission Hospital, Durgapur 4) Shri Biswajit Ghosh, WBCS (Exe), SDM ,Durgapur. Dr. Ananya Mukherjee said, "This day is not just a celebration. It is our responsibility and duty to break down barriers of discrimination and create a world where every woman has the freedom to live freely and live safely. Smt. Sushmita Nath, a Beta Thalassaemia Major patient and a born fighter, working as a counsellor in the Hematology Department of NRS Medical College and Hospital, was very happy and grateful to the Durgapur Chapter for this honor . She shared her own fight and struggle and also congratulated all the hemophilic mothers and carrier women for their daily struggles, sufferings and encouraged them to live always a positive and constructive life. She emphasised for the education to all the girls. When we educate a girl, we empower a family. Dr. Ipsita Nag said that it is our responsibility to create a society where women have equal opportunities , respect and values . She congratulated both women and men on this International Day because gender equality is our common goal. Shri Biswajit Ghosh told that International Women's Day is not just a day of appreciation, it is a reminder that the fight for equal rights must continue every day. Smt. Kalyani Bhandari, Convenor, Women's Group thanked to all the guests and women's member of Durgapur Chapter and told that we all should take pledge to support, uplift, and empower the women around us—not just today, but every day.



BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari with other leaders and activists took part in a protest rally against the State Government in Kolkata on Sunday.

Setback to government paddy collection: Only 15.02 lakh registered farmers sell produce

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Bengal government could procure paddy directly from only 66 per cent of 22.64 lakh farmers who registered themselves to sell their produce to the state, leaving the ruling establishment in a spot as it wanted to reach out to a maximum number of cultivators by securing minimum support price (MSP) for their crop ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls. The ruling establishment had aimed to reach out to 25 lakh farmers across the state with the MSP. Bengal has 72 lakh

farmers who hold the key to electoral success. However, only 22.64 lakh farmers had registered themselves to sell their produce to the government as they did not find the MSP attractive.

"Now, the state is in a spot as only 15.02 lakh sold their produce to the government. This makes it clear the state failed to bring a majority of the farmers under the MSP net, which may not be a good sign for the ruling establishment ahead of the Assembly elections," said a senior bureaucrat.

Close call at Bagdogra: IAF transport plane overshoots runway, no casualty

MI News Service, Siliguri: An AN-32 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force overshoot the runway while landing at Bagdogra airport in north Bengal, a Defence official said here on Saturday.

There was no casualty in the accident that occurred on Friday, he said. An inquiry into the accident has been initiated by the IAF authorities, the official said.

Bagdogra airport is a "civil enclave". It is situated near Siliguri in north Bengal.

Only women to man Cooch Behar rail station: Men divested of administration and security duties

MI News Service, Cooch Behar: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) announced that the Cooch Behar railway station would be an all-women's station from Saturday.

"From today, Cooch Behar station will be entirely run and managed by our women employees. Right from the frontline staff to the administration to the security personnel, all would be women. On occasion of the International Women's Day today, the women employees were handed over their respective charges at the station," said Abhay Ganpat Sanap, the senior divisional commercial manager of the Alipurduar division of the NFR.



On Sunday, Belgharia Mansabgh Sarbojanin Durga Utsav Puja Committee and Mansabgh Sporting Club organized a spring festival for orphaned children of Dakshineswar Ramakrishna Sangha Adapatih. The spring festival was attended by Professor Saugata Roy, MP of Dum Dum Lok Sabha constituency. Gopal Saha, Municipal Chief of Kamarhati Municipality, Somnath Chatopadhyay and other distinguished guests. On the occasion of the spring festival, Abhijit Chakladar and Mani Ghosh, on behalf of the club, said that more than 300 orphaned children and local children participated in the Abir game and were entertained with a lunch. This spring festival became very joyful with songs, dances, poetry and cultural programs.

Workers, staff protest pay delay: Six-hour demonstration on Bamandanga-Tondu tea estate

MI News Service, Nagrakata: Staff, sub-staff and workers of the Bamandanga-Tondu tea estate in Jalpaiguri district held a six-hour demonstration in the garden on Saturday demanding immediate payment of their wages and salaries.

The estate in Nagrakata block has around 1,300 labourers.

"The workers are yet to receive wages of three fortnights while the staff and the sub-staff were not paid salaries in the past two months. We are in an acute financial crisis and so demonstrated in the garden today (on Saturday). The management should understand our situation and disburse the dues as soon as possible," said Sanjit

Lohar, a worker. A section of the workers and the employees assembled in front of the garden factory around 8am and launched the demonstration which continued till 2 pm.

Puja Oraon, a woman worker, said the production was regular in the garden. "Even then, we are not getting the wages. These days, we are facing problems even in meeting the basic expenses and the studies of our children are getting affected," she said.

Sources said although the garden was open and the production was on, the management was facing financial problems, which was leading to delays in the disbursement of wages and salaries.

A section of the demonstrators said the management should hold talks with the workers to resolve the problems.

"Or else, the state government should find a new investor who will run the garden in a better manner. Recently, the state handed over leases to new entrepreneurs who are running some gardens. We believe the SOP (standard operating procedure) that the state announced to address the problems in gardens like ours should be used to help us," said Birbal Sau, another worker.

Sujit Ganguly, the manager, said: "We have intimated the higher levels of the management about the protest and are waiting for their instructions."



A press conference was organised at Kolkata Press Club by Desh Bachao Gana Mancha regarding recent incident at JU in Kolkata on Sunday. Many eminent personalities were present at the occasion.

ED confiscates Rs 14 Cr...

From PG 1

has claimed that proceeds from the Falcon Group's Ponzi scheme were diverted to purchase the jet.

The Falcon Group allegedly collected 17,000 crore from a large number of

investors, promising high returns through a fraudulent investment scheme. Sources said 850 crore, out of the total funds, was paid back, leaving a total of 6,979 investors unpaid.

The ED had registered the money-laundering case on the basis of an FIR registered by Cyberabad police against Falcon Group (Capital Protection Force Pvt Ltd), its CMD and some others.

A search of the jet, purchased last year, was conducted by ED officials on Friday under the Preven-

tion of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). They also recorded the statement of the crew and some "close associates" of Kumar present there, sources said.

The business jet, owned by Kumar's private charter company, Prestige Jets Inc, was seized after the search.

"We got to know that the eight-seater business jet landed at the international airport on Friday. The agency contacted the customs department about the movement of the jet, following which it was discovered that Kumar and another person used it to flee the country on January 22," an ED official said.

Cyberabad police have also arrested the vice-president and director of Falcon Group as part of its investigation.

USA wants 'large' & 'grand'...

From PG 1

farmers could be at the mercy of these global giants, leading to severe political and economic consequences. This makes agriculture a contentious issue for Indian government," he said.

India maintains a tariff structure ranging from zero to 150 per cent to protect its agricultural sector. The US also imposes higher tariffs on select agricultural goods - for instance, tobacco (350 per cent).

Additionally, the US applies complex non-ad valorem (NAV) tariffs that make imports more expensive, a fact often overlooked in trade discussions, according to the GTRI.

The US agri exports to India was USD 1.6 billion in 2024. Key exports include - Almonds (in shell - USD 868 million); Pistachios (USD 121 million), Apples (USD 21 million), Ethanol (ethyl alcohol - USD 266 million).

Srivastava said the US provides massive subsidies to its farm sector and in fact in some years, the subsidy level exceeded 50 per cent of production value for certain products, such as: Rice (82 per cent), Canola (61 per cent), Sugar (66 per cent), Cotton (74 per cent), Mohair (141 per cent), Wool (215 per cent). The US may want to push many of such exports. Dairy is another key sector of American interest. "If India opens its dairy sector, it could lead to

an influx of heavily subsidized imports, threatening the livelihoods of millions of small-scale Indian dairy farmers," he added.

Given that over 50 per cent of India's population relies on agriculture for its livelihood, India treats the entire sector as sensitive, Srivastava said and added that tariffs are particularly important for staple crops, dairy, and key farm products that sustain rural livelihoods. India's agricultural tariffs do not violate WTO commitments. The rules allow member countries to protect sensitive sectors, particularly those linked to food security and rural employment, which are crucial for India.

In FY 2024, India's total agricultural exports stood at USD 45.7 billion, with a portion of this going to the US (USD 5 billion).

Tariffs are only part of the trade equation. Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) also play a significant role in restricting market access.

Srivastava said that the US has complex sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations that often act as disguised trade barriers. For instance, the Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) imposed by the US on pesticides and chemicals in agricultural products are among the most stringent in the world, making compliance difficult for developing countries, including India.

J&K: Security forces recover...

From PG 1

ascertained only after a post-mortem. BJP spokesperson and legislator Pathania said the killings would not go unpunished.

"Prima facie, it appears that terrorists were involved. I strongly condemn the killings. Jammu and Kashmir will be terrorism-free under the zero-tolerance terror policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah," he said in a video message.

If Pathania's claim of militant involvement is right, it marks a dangerous turn of events with the militants increasingly targeting innocent Hindu civilians. Despite the Centre's promise of a "terrorism-free" Jammu and Kashmir for years, militancy has witnessed a spike in Jammu in recent years.

Two civilians — Shamsher, 37, and

Roshan, 45 — were found dead at Kohag village in Billawar on February 18. They had gone out to collect wood.

Former panchayat leader Amrik Singh said police were yet to ascertain the cause of their death.

Last year, militants had killed four army soldiers and injured four more in Lohai Malhar in Kathua district. Cop under fire A special police officer (SPO) in Jammu and Kashmir reportedly forced two Gujjar youths to prostrate before a cow and touch its feet, triggering outrage in Jammu and Kashmir. "Shocking to see how SPO Shashoo in Kishtwar heckled & threatened two locals Mohd Ashraf & Mudasir Ahmed & then went onto record & circulate a video capturing their humiliation," former chief minister Mehbooba said, posting the video on X.

Mamata has shown remarkable restraint in JU fiasco: Saayoni Ghosh

MI News Service, Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has shown remarkable restraint despite the attack on Education Minister Bratya Basu by Left-wing students on the Jadavpur University campus, TMC MP Saayoni Ghosh said.

Ghosh, the MP of Jadavpur constituency, said if the situation on the campus continues to remain as it is, the reputation of the varsity will slide to a point of no return.

"Mamata Banerjee is showing remarkable patience and restraint despite provocations by the Left-wing students, who are disrupting the situation on the campus. Due to the patience shown by the CM, police are not entering the campus despite the attack on the minister. JU has al-



ways been known for its liberal values and high academic standards," she told.

"But if such hooliganism by SFI and Naxals continues, the day is not far that the reputation of the varsity slides to a point of no return. We don't wish that to happen," she added.

Demonstrations at Jadavpur University demanding the long-pending students' union elections escalated on March 1 when the education minister was visiting the campus to attend an event. Amid attempts to gherao him, Basu's convoy allegedly grazed past two students, injuring them.

Basu, however, alleged that he was injured when the protesting students vandalised

his car's windshield.

Reacting to the MP's statement, CPI(M) central committee member Sujan Chakraborty said TMC leaders were competing with each other to make provocative statements to get "promotion" within the party.

"These statements show the anti-democratic and autocratic nature of the TMC but the students' community of the state will not be intimidated by such rabble-rousers," he said.

The Left-wing students' groups have been maintaining that in the absence of elected students' unions in the colleges and universities, there is no space left for students to let their views known to the authorities, besides, it has opened the path for corruption.

Steps against JU 'anarchy' after HS exams: Bratya Basu

MI News Service, Kolkata:

The state government would firmly deal with the "anarchy" that is prevailing on the Jadavpur University campus after the higher secondary exams, education minister Bratya Basu said.

"We will end this anarchy prevailing at Jadavpur University. The administration has not taken lightly the way some hooligans carried out vandalism on that day (on March 1 when Basu went to the campus). I can tell you this much," Basu told. "We are waiting for HS to end and then will take steps." The HS exams began on March 3 and will go on till March 18.

The minister, however, did not specify the



steps they are planning to take.

"No decision has been taken on this yet. Definitely we will do it democratically. This kind of lawlessness... I am again daring them, these Left

and ultra-Left activists, to exhibit such anarchy in a BJP-ruled state," he said.

JU is witnessing unrest since Basu's visit to the campus to attend a meeting of a pro-Trinamool teachers' association on March 1.

Basu's comment came a day after a criminal case was lodged against him and others based on an email complaint by Indranuj Roy, who was allegedly hit by the minister's car.

Asked why it was important to deal with the anarchy firmly, Basu said: "It is important to bring down the tensions on the campus for the sake of those students who come to JU to study and not to pursue politics of any hue. Campus unrest

starts in JU even over the issue of installing CCTV cameras. The office of the VC remains gheraoed for days." "Students can hold discussions with the university administration over keeping certain places outside the ambit of CCTV surveillance. But how can they object to bringing the campus under CCTV surveillance when there is a Supreme Court directive?" he asked. When JU decided to set up CCTVs on the campus and in hostels in September 2023, following the death of a first-year undergraduate student who was allegedly ragged at the JU Main Hostel a month earlier, students protested the move, arguing they were opposed to surveillance.

City students rank first at National Policy Hackathon

MI News Service, Kolkata: Kolkata students Abhishek Banerjee and Ashmita Seal secured first place at the National Policy Hackathon 2025, jointly organised by the public policy clubs of the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta and the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT Kolkata).

The Kolkata students outper-

formed teams from Christ University, Bangalore, and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad, who finished second and third, respectively.

Abhishek Banerjee and Ashmita Seal are from The Heritage College. The students presented the topic — Enhancing Access to Secondary Education in India. As part of the project, they studied the National

Education Policy 2020 and suggested recommendations within the existing framework in their presentation.

Abhishek and Ashmita submitted an 800-word presentation competing against more than 400 teams from across the country.

For the second round, they submitted a 3,000-word project. The finals were held in IIM Calcutta.

JU: Jadavpur PS quizzes Srijan, teachers over Mar 1 violence

MI News Service, Kolkata: CPM student wing leader Srijan Bhattacharya appeared before Jadavpur police after being summoned and told to submit video footage he had been showing at news conferences to try and prove that state education minister Bratya Basu's car hit Jadavpur University (JU) student Indranuj Roy.

Police also went to JU professor Om Prakash Mishra's home to question him. The police have drawn up an FIR against Mishra based on a complaint by Indranuj.

The police also went to RN Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences in Mukundapur to speak to JU vice-chancellor Bhaskar Gupta about the March 1 violence on the campus. VC Gupta told "The police have repeatedly questioned me about what happened that day. Who was involved. They also sought to know if I had allegations against anyone. I told them it unfolded before the eyes of all."

The VC said: "I told them that I did not have allegations against anyone. They also asked how many times I have been gheraoed by the students over the past few months.



They recorded my statement."

On March 1, Gupta was seated next to education minister Bratya Basu when Left and ultra-Left students barricaded the minister, demanding a discussion on campus polls.

Gupta was present at the spot where the students had allegedly heckled the minister and hurled shoes at his car. Around the same time, the minister's car had allegedly hit Indranuj who was trying to prevent the Basu's car from leaving the campus.

Indranuj in his email to Jadavpur police station on March 1 evening had alleged that pro-Trinamool teacher Mishra assaulted the students around the time tension broke out on the campus over campus

polls.

The police have drawn up an FIR against minister Basu, his driver and Mishra after Calcutta High Court instructed the police to treat Indranuj's email as an FIR.

Mishra said: "I was physically assaulted on March 1. On that day, after stepping out of the campus I went to Jadavpur police station. But I did not lodge an FIR against anyone. The police asked me why I did not lodge an FIR. I told them it would be improper to lodge an FIR against students. The police spoke to me for 25 minutes. My car did not run over any student."

He said: "I told the police that it was not clear to me why they came to me asking about campus elections when the VC was

present at the same spot."

The police went to KPC Medical College and Hospital around 6pm on Saturday to speak to Indranuj.

Amit Roy, his father, said: "The police asked him what happened on that day, what their demands were and how he got injured. He was also asked what he was doing before the car of the minister."

Srijan, SFI leader and a former student of JU, went to the police station around 7pm with his lawyers.

He told reporters after stepping out around 8.30pm that he had submitted evidence before the police that suggests that minister Basu's car had run over Indranuj on March 1.

Srijan also said footage was submitted to substantiate how several students were injured on March 1 when the minister went to the campus to attend a meeting of a pro-Trinamool teachers' association. Several students held an agitation outside Jadavpur police station saying the police had not summoned the "TMC goons" who were present during the "chaos" on the campus on March 1, but Srijan was called.

KMC relaxes mandatory open space requirement policy on 'small' plots

MI News Service, Kolkata:

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has decided to relax the mandatory open space requirement for buildings coming up on thika, bustee and colony land of plot sizes of no more than 3 cottahs in the hope that it will encourage a larger proportion of owners to get their building plans cleared by engineers before construction.

The civic body also reduced the regularisation fee of illegal structures on colony, thika and bustee land while making it mandatory for the owners to provide a structural stability certificate when applying for regularisation.

Civic officials said existing building rules made it difficult for owners of small plots to get building plans approved by the KMC. Thus, buildings would come up without an engineer's supervision and the notice of the civic body.

"The changes announced will ensure some sort of quality check," said an official.

"We have decided to reduce the open area requirements for small plots. A house coming up on a 7 chhatak (300sqft) to 10 chhatak (450sqft) plot will now need to leave only 1ft of open space in front, 1ft each on two sides and 3ft at the back," Hakim said.

The maximum height of the building could be 10 metres, which engineers said is the height of a three-storey structure.

The KMC has broken up plot sizes up to 3 cottah into several slabs — 7 chhatak to 10 chhatak; 11 chhatak to 1 cottah; 1cottah to 2 cottah; 2 cottah to 3 cottah — with an accompanying mandatory open space requirement for each slab.

Earlier, all buildings, irrespective of plot size, had to leave at least 4ft

open on all four sides, a KMC official said. The mandatory open space requirement could have varied on the four sides, but none could be less than 4ft.

"I had formed a committee on how to build a house on a small plot. The committee submitted its report, and the mayoral council has adopted it," said Hakim.

The change comes after at least two buildings in the city tilted in January. A four-storey building in Jadavpur's Vidyasagar Colony tilted after its pillars collapsed. KMC officials said they found that many buildings in the area had come up without a plan certified by the civic body.

Later in January, two houses in Tangra were spotted tilting towards each other, one leaning more than the other. Both had come up without valid building permits.

"The regularisation fee of an illegal structure on a 3-cottah plot (in colony, thika and bustee area) was about 3.27 lakh. We have brought it down to 42,000. They have to get a certificate from a structural engineer," said Hakim.

KMC sources said this will ensure some checks and scrutiny of a structure that may have been built without the supervision of a qualified engineer.

"The LBS (an engineer) will submit a building plan and we will approve it within 15 days," Hakim said on Friday while speaking on allowing buildings on tiny plots.

"There is a history of constructing illegal buildings across the colony, bustee and thika plots. We want to stop that and also bring in some quality check," said the official.

"In other parts of Calcutta, we will not allow any illegal construction," said the official.

Kasba Suicide: Police arrest 2nd loan agent

MI News Service, Kolkata:

A second loan agent has been arrested in connection with the deaths of

Somnath Roy and his wife in Kasba. Roy and his wife, Sumitra, were found hanging at their Kasba home. The body of their two-and-a-half-year-old child was found hanging from a sling around his father's neck.

The family was allegedly unable to bear the pressure of their debt and loan sharks, such as the one arrested. Somshubra Mondal, 24, was arrested in Sonarpur on the southern outskirts of the city.

Police tracked him down to his house after finding his name among those scribbled on the walls of the house in Kasba.

Mondal is the second agent arrested on the charge of abetting the sui-

cides of the couple. The cops said Mondal, too, had helped Roy secure loans.

On Thursday, the police arrested Chanchal Mukhopadhyay on the same charge as that of Mondal — abetting the suicides. "Like Mukhopadhyay, Mondal assisted Roy in securing loans in small amounts ranging between 1.62 lakh and 5 lakh from different banks, financial institutions and instant loan providing platforms," said a senior officer of Kasba police station.

The police said Mondal allegedly kept mounting pressure on Roy to return the money.

On Friday, officers traced him to Notun Pally in Subhasgram in Sonarpur, around 30km south of Calcutta. He was arrested in the early hours of Saturday.

Name Change

I, Sk Najruluddin (Old Name) son of Shek Ganiruddin, residing at GOBRA, PS-RAMNAGAR, EAST MEDINIPUR-721441, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Shek Najrul (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Azizul Mondal (Old Name) and Sk Najruluddin (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Azizul Mondal (old name) S/O Iyaz Ali Mondal, residing at Parulha, Dighalgram, P.S.- Haringhata, Nadia- 741257, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Azizul Mondal (new name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata dated 07/03/2025. Azizul Mondal (new name) and Azizul Mondal (old name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Rongon Bhuiya (Old Name) son of Sudarshan Bhuiya, residing at Chaik Jaisai, P.O.- Purba Ramnathpur, P.S.- Magrahat, Dist.- South 24 Pgs, Pin- 743355, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Ranjan Bhuiya (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Ranjan Bhuiya (New Name) and Rongon Bhuiya (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Sanjay Kumar Jaiswal (Old Name) son of Subhas Chandra Jaiswal, residing at 5/2, Gour Des Lane, P.O.- BOWBAZAR, KOLKATA- 700012, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sanjay Jaiswal (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Sanjay Jaiswal (New Name) and Sanjay Kumar Jaiswal (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Sk Nizam (Old Name) son of Sk Majid, residing at Vill.- Jamna, P.O.- Rajjama, P.S.- Pandua, Hooghly, 712134, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Nijam Sekh (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Nijam Sekh (New Name) and Sk Nizam (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, A Karim Molya (Old Name) son of Maolabaksa, residing at Vill.- Bamunia, P.O.- Krishnamati, Bhangar (II), South 24 Parganas, Pin- 743502, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdul Karim Molla (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Abdul Karim Molla (New Name) and A Karim Molya (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Rabeya Mandal (Old Name) wife of Giasuddin Mondal, residing at Vill.- Trimohini Basirhat, P.O.- Basirhat College, P.S.- Basirhat, Dist.- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 743412, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Rabeya Mandal (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Rabeya Mandal (New Name) and Rabeya Mandal (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Sahauddin Ali Ahmed (Old Name) son of Basarat Mondal, residing at Vill.- Khamarpara, P.O.- Taragunia, P.S.- Baduria, Dist.- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 743401, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sahauddin Ali Ahmed Mondal (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata, dated 07/03/2025. Sahauddin Ali Ahmed Mondal (New Name) and Sahauddin Ali Ahmed (Old Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Arop Nabi Molla, Son Of Md Golam Rasul Molla, Residing At Vill & Po - Chakhaturia, Usthi, South 24 parganas - 743503, West Bengal, Shall Henceforth Be Known As Md Arop Nabi Molla Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 06/03/2025. That Arop Nabi Molla And Md Arop Nabi Molla Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Golam Rasul Molla, Son Of Md Karamali Molla, Residing At Vill & Po Chakhaturia, Usthi, South 24 parganas - 743503, West Bengal, Shall Henceforth Be Known As Md Golam Rasul Molla Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 06/03/2025. That Golam Rasul Molla And Md Golam Rasul Molla Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Narayan Sunita W/O Mahesh Narayan R/O 23a, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, Po Park Street, Kolkata 700016, Wb Shall Henceforth Be Known As Sunita Gupta Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public Kolkata On 7th March 2025. That Narayan Sunita And Sunita Gupta Both Are Same And One Identical Person Not Two Different Person.

Name Change

I, Isahaque Mollick, S/O Late Aziz Rahaman Mallick, Residing at Vill & Post- Kalsa, P.S.- Falta, Dist.- Sout 24 Parganas, Pin-743503. Do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that my name and shall henceforth be known as Esahaque Mallick as declare before the Notary Public at Diamond Harbour Court on 05.03.2025 that Esahaque Mallick, Isahaque Mollick and Esahaque Mallick is the Same and one Identical Person.

International Women's Day

Women Leading Safety, Operations and Management in Railways

MI News Service, New Delhi: Celebrating International Women's Day 2025 with grandeur, enthusiasm and pride, Indian Railways reinforced its commitment to women's empowerment. Various inspirational programmes were organised across the country to honour the hard work, contributions and achievements of women employees. Whether operating trains as loco pilots, managing stations, handling ticket counters, inspecting tickets, excelling in international sports, contributing to engineering or ensuring security as part of the Railway Protection Force (RPF)—Indian Railways' Nari Shakti (woman power) has proven its efficiency and leadership in every domain.

Operation of All-Women-Staffed Trains: On this occasion, several trains were operated entirely by women staff. The Vande Bharat Express from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) to Sainagar Shirdi was fully managed by women staff. Similarly, an all-women freight train was flagged off from Saffdarjung Railway Station, New Delhi. In Bengaluru Division, the KSR Bengaluru-Mysuru Malgudi Express and Mysuru-Jaipur Express were also operated exclusively by women. Additionally, the Bhopal-Bilaspur Express and Bundelkhand Express in Jhansi Division were managed by female Railway staff.

Women's Participation in Station Management: At Sealdah Station, the 'Matribhumi Local' (Ladies Special EMU) train was operated by an all-women crew. The entire management of Gorakhpur Junction was handled by women employees. Matunga Railway Station in Maharashtra and Gandhinagar Railway Station in Rajasthan continued to be led by women staff. Additionally, the Alipurduar Division of Northeast Frontier Railway announced that Cooch Behar Railway Station (COB) will now be managed entirely by women.

Honouring Women Employees: Across different Railway zones, female loco pilots, train managers, ticket-checking staff and other women employees were recognised for their outstanding contributions. Special award ceremonies were held in Northern and Southern Railways to honour women employees for their outstanding contributions. In West Central Railway's Jabalpur, Bhopal and Kota divisions, commendation certificates were presented to outstanding female employees. To promote awareness and well-being, Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai organised quiz competitions, yoga sessions and mental health programmes. Western Railway launched a special podcast episode titled 'Nothing is Impossible', featuring the inspiring journey of Asia's first female motorman. East Coast Railway conducted yoga sessions and wellness counselling for women. Additionally, several Railway stations across the country were illuminated with special lights in honour of women employees.

Special Initiatives for Women Employees: Indian Railways announced enhancements in women's help desks, monitoring systems and security measures. Self-defence and financial literacy workshops were conducted in Kota Division, while seminars on cyber fraud and financial awareness were held in Ratlam Division. In Jabalpur Division, a breast cancer screening camp was organised, benefiting over 200 women.

Indian Railways' Commitment: Dilip Kumar, Executive Director (Information & Publicity) of the Railway Board, emphasised that Indian Railways is consistently working towards increasing women's participation in Railway operations and promoting gender equality. Through initiatives like all-women-staffed trains, women-managed stations and various empowerment programmes, Indian Railways ensures that women take on leading roles in every sector. Currently, out of 12.3 lakh employees in Indian Railways, 1.13 lakh are women. The workforce includes over 2,000 female loco pilots and nearly 1,900 female station managers. The International Women's Day 2025 celebrations in Indian Railways not only highlighted the significant role of women but also reinforced the commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. This event was not just a celebration but a strong step toward an inclusive and progressive future.

NCC Coaching Depot/Sealdah An epitome Of Nari Shakti

MI News Service, Kolkata: Eastern Railway paving a path for all-round development of its women employees mentally, physically and financially. A holistic approach to the empowerment of the lady employees is resulting in an inclusive work environment all over Eastern Railway. The NCC Coaching Depot of Sealdah division under the leadership of Smt. Divya Verma, Coaching Depot Officer is further enhancing the progress of lady employees. The Eastern Railway's NCC Coaching Depot in Sealdah division is a wonderful illustration of how women may be empowered in society. The main goal of woman empowerment is to provide women the freedom to take charge of their lives, make their own decisions, and receive equal opportunities and gender equality. Smt. Divya Verma working as Coaching Depot Officer is the perfect example of women empowerment and leading the system from the front. During this fiscal year, around 7000 Mail/Exp/Passengers trains were maintained at Sealdah Depot under leadership of Coaching depot officer. Total 110 nos female staff are working in the Sealdah Depot who is shouldering the same responsibility along with male staffs. The female staffs are successfully conduct the examina-



tion and repair of safety items of trains. They are also successfully performing the Air Brake Testing and ensure 100% Brake power of a train, apart from this female staffs are working in the field of Carpentry, plumbing work. Every female employee plays a vital role in the maintenance of trains and this is the wonderful example of growing woman and breaking the stereotypes of the society. • Premium trains like Rajdhani maintained by female staff under the leadership of female supervisor Miss Manita Sarkar. • Bio-Toilet Effluent Testing Laboratory is also available for testing of the discharge effluent and to maintain the hygiene of the bio toilet. This laboratory for testing of effluent run by majority of female staffs. • Record keeping of establishment and human resource management of Sealdah Coaching depot are also done by lady employees.

Railway Board Chairman Satish Kumar Honored Women Railway Employees, Says "Women Are the Pride of Our Culture"



MI News Service, New Delhi: New Delhi: On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Railway Women's Welfare Central Organization (RWCCO) organized a grand felicitation ceremony at the National Rail Museum Auditorium, New Delhi. The event's chief guest, Railway Board Chairman & CEO Mr. Satish Kumar, honored 33 outstanding women employees selected from various railway zones, production units (PUs), and public sector undertakings (PSUs). He stated that women are not

just equal to men but are contributing even more to the nation's development through their hard work. Highlighting the significant role of women in Indian Railways, Mr. Satish Kumar emphasized that their participation is not limited to the workplace but is an integral part of the organization's strength and success. Their dedication, commitment, and leadership have been instrumental in taking Indian Railways to new heights. Quoting a poem, he remarked: "Women are dignity, women are honor."

Women are the pride of our culture. Women are strength, devotion, and the true expression of life's radiance." On this occasion, the President of RWCCO, Dr. Ruby Rani Singh, discussed various initiatives undertaken by Indian Railways to empower women employees, ensure workplace safety, and promote gender equality. Several dignitaries, including Secretary Mrs. Amrita Sharma, Treasurer Mrs. Nirdesh Singh, and Joint Secretary Mrs. Anjali Verma, were also present at the event.

List of Outstanding Women Employees - 2025

No.	Name	Designation	Railway Zone
1	Mrs. Deepa Sanjay Kaithwas	Constable/RPF	Central Railway
2	Mrs. Ritvika Sarkar	Technician	Eastern Railway
3	Mrs. Pinky Kumari	Pointsman	East Central Railway
4	Mrs. Susobhini Naik	Chief Nursing Superintendent	East Coast Railway
5	Mrs. Veena	Technician	Northern Railway
6	Mrs. Rachna	Constable/RPF	NCR
7	Mrs. Sunita Sharma	Office Superintendent	North Eastern Railway
8	Mrs. Nupur Tapadar	Senior Technician	North East Frontier Railway
9	Mrs. Pinky Jat	Constable/RPF	North Western Railway
10	Mrs. Mahita K	Senior Technician	Southern Railway
11	Mrs. Rajita Munagala	TTI	South Central Railway
12	Mrs. Sumita Choudhary	Senior DTI (Safety)	South Eastern Railway
13	Mrs. Sunita Dashrath Barmaiya	Accounts Assistant	South East Central Railway
14	Mrs. Shilpa S.	Constable/RPF	South Western Railway
15	Mrs. Seema S. Kushwaha	Technician	Western Railway
16	Mrs. Kalpana Chaurae	Welder	West Central Railway
17	Mrs. Poomima Karmakar	Technician	Metro Railway
18	Mrs. Banhishikha Chakraborty	PGT/Geography	Chittaranjan Locomotive Works
19	Mrs. Usha Singh	Chief Nursing Superintendent	Banaras Locomotive Works
20	Mrs. L.R. Subathra	Technician	Integral Coach Factory
21	Mrs. Sunita Devi	Chief Office Superintendent	Rail Coach Factory
22	Mrs. Harjeet Kaur	Office Superintendent	Patiala Locomotive Works
23	Mrs. Anuradha Sharma	Manager, Guest Services	NAIR
24	Mrs. Renu Pandey	PS	RDSO
25	Mrs. Shiny Swarupi	Accounts Assistant	Rail Wheel Factory
26	Mrs. Afsana Begum	Chief Office Superintendent	Modern Coach Factory
27	Mrs. Ashwini Shaligram Meshram	Senior ALP/CTCC	CRIS
28	Mrs. Ruchi Lauhari	HR Assistant	MRVC
29	Mrs. Sunita Swami	Assistant Section Officer	Railway Board
30	Mrs. Manjita Devi	Section Officer (HR)	RITES
31	Mrs. Nisha Vasan	Manager/Administration/Civil	DFFCIL
32	Mrs. A. Deepika Balmuchu	Manager (Finance)	RVNL
33	Mrs. Deepavali Kuhad	Assistant Officer (C&O)	CONCOR

On International Women's Day, Indian Railways decides to equip Women RPF personnel with Chilli Spray Cans

MI News Service, New Delhi: Indian Railways has decided to equip women personnel of the Railway Protection Force with chilli spray cans. This non-lethal yet effective tool will help women RPF personnel tackle challenging situations swiftly, particularly while safeguarding female passengers traveling alone or with children for ensuring safer train journeys for women passengers. This innovative move reflects Indian Railways' strong commitment to gender inclusivity, women empowerment, and enhanced security across its vast network. By providing chilli spray cans, women RPF personnel will have an additional layer of security, allowing them to deter threats, respond to incidents of harassment, and handle emergencies effectively — especially in sensitive areas like isolated stations, running trains, and remote railway locations where immediate backup might not be available. Backing this initiative, the

Director General of RPF, Shri. Manoj Yadav stated "The initiative aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of empowering women and ensuring safer public spaces. Indian Railways has consistently introduced several measures to improve the travel experience for women passengers. The role of women RPF personnel extends far beyond security. They frequently assist female passengers in distress, including expectant mothers who go into labor during train journeys. Under 'Operation Matrishakti', women RPF personnel have helped 174 women safely give birth onboard trains in 2024 alone, ensuring privacy, dignity, and timely medical aid. During major events like the Mahakumbh, RPF's women personnel worked tirelessly alongside their male counterparts, offering prompt assistance to thousands of women pilgrims who arrived for the holy dip at Prayagraj. Armed with the new tool in hand, women RPF personnel will embody strength, compassion and resilience, reaffirming Indian Railways' dedication to safe and secure journey for women passengers.

travellers. Over 250 'Meri Saheli' teams interact with nearly 12,900 female passengers daily, offering both security and reassurance. The role of women RPF personnel extends far beyond security. They frequently assist female passengers in distress, including expectant mothers who go into labor during train journeys. Under 'Operation Matrishakti', women RPF personnel have helped 174 women safely give birth onboard trains in 2024 alone, ensuring privacy, dignity, and timely medical aid. During major events like the Mahakumbh, RPF's women personnel worked tirelessly alongside their male counterparts, offering prompt assistance to thousands of women pilgrims who arrived for the holy dip at Prayagraj. Armed with the new tool in hand, women RPF personnel will embody strength, compassion and resilience, reaffirming Indian Railways' dedication to safe and secure journey for women passengers.

Enhancing Safety & Connectivity: Limited Height Subway successfully completed in Katwa Ahmadpur Section



MI News Service, Kolkata: As part of its continued commitment to enhancing passenger safety, operational efficiency, and infrastructure development, Eastern Railway's Howrah Division has successfully completed a Limited Height Subway (LHS) to eliminate Level Crossing (LC) Gate No. 14/C/E in the Katwa-Ahmadpur section. This was achieved through the planned insertion of Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) boxes and base slabs, ensuring a safer and more seamless transport network. The critical infrastructure work was carried out from 14:00 hrs to 20:00 hrs. A total of 6 RCC box segments and 5 RCC base slabs were inserted to replace the level crossing. Due to efficient planning and execution, the work was successfully completed ahead of schedule at 19:00 hrs, facilitating the early resumption of train services. Once the Limited Height Subway is operational, the LC gate will be permanently closed. This initiative marks a significant step toward eliminating level crossings, enhancing safety, and ensuring uninterrupted train movement and smoother road traffic flow. The successful completion of this project reflects Eastern Railway's dedication to modernizing railway infrastructure and improving travel experiences. Such initiatives align with its mission to create a safer, more efficient, and passenger-friendly transportation network.

Special Camps To Facilitate Commuters For Recharging Smart Cards Online And Promote Upi Payment-Based Ticketing System

MI News Service, Kolkata: In order to make different digital payment modes introduced in Metro Railway familiar to the commuters and enhance the share of digital transactions in ticketing, Special Camps were organised today on 09.03.2025 by Metro staff at all stations of Blue Line. In these camps, Metro users were made aware about 'Metro Ride Kolkata' app and how to download it from Google Play Store (Android) and App Store (iOS). Metro staff also showed them the procedures to use it. Metro commuters were also helped to purchase tokens and recharge/buy their Smart Cards through ASCRM machines with the help of UPI Payment Based Ticketing System. They have shown keen interest to shift to digital system and adopt smart ways to purchase tokens, Smart Cards and recharge it. They were visibly happy as this digital mode is helping them to save their valuable time as they don't need to stand in the long queues in front of



the booking counters to recharge or purchase their Smart Cards or purchase tickets. It is worth mentioning that the digital transaction of Metro Railway has already crossed 30 percent of its total transaction.

22388 Dn Black Diamond Express While Diverting From Dn Main Line To Down Hbc At Liluah, Stopped From 21:08 Hrs To 21:34 Hrs For Acp (Alarm Chain Pulling) In Ac Chair Car Coach (C-2) As One Person Was Fallen On Track While Detraining From Running Train. Injured Person Was Rescued And Sent To Hospital. Repercussions-02 Mail/Express & 09 EMU locals delayed by 15 minutes on an average.

OFFICE OF THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Katwa-II Development Block
Dainhat, Purba Bardhaman

Notice Inviting e-Tender
e-Tenders are invited vide eNIT No.-WB/PURBA-BWN/KAT-II/24-25/047, Date: 07.03.2025 by the BDO, Katwa II Dev. Block, Dainhat, Purba Bardhaman. Intending bidders are requested to visit the website www.wbtenders.gov.in/ for details. Last date of Tender submission 15.03.2025 upto 18:00 hours. Sd/-
B.D.O.
Katwa-II Development Block

TARAKESWAR MUNICIPALITY
e-Tender Notice

The Chairman, Tarakeswar Municipality invites of e-tender for following Development work within Tarakeswar Municipality:

Sl. No.	Tender for	e-Bid submission Start Date	e-Bid submission end Date	Technical Bid Opening date
1.	2025_MAD_824677_1	10.03.2025	28.03.2025	01.04.2025
2.	2025_MAD_824677_2	10.03.2025	28.03.2025	01.04.2025
3.	2025_MAD_824677_3	10.03.2025	28.03.2025	01.04.2025
4.	2025_MAD_824736_1	10.03.2025	19.03.2025	21.03.2025

Details information will be available from the website- <http://wbtenders.gov.in>

Chairman
Tarakeswar Municipality

Delhi govt to conduct cyber security audit of IT system

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Delhi government will conduct a cyber security audit of its Information Technology (IT) system for the detection of vulnerabilities to prevent any breach of security and data theft, officials said. The government has geared up for hiring a CERT-in (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) empanelled agency for the three-year project, they said. The officials said the hypertext transfer protocols (https) have become the easiest path for cyber attackers to intrude on a network, with growth in vulnerabilities in applications.

Genetic study finds high inbreeding rates in South Indian communities

MI News Service, New Delhi: A study that analysed genes of South Indian populations suggests a high inbreeding rate of nearly 60 per cent. The historic practice of inbreeding or endogamy in which one marries within a small community, increases chances of passing down disease-causing gene variants -- changes to one's DNA -- to children, thereby raising the risk of genetic disorders. Lead author Kumarasamy Thangaraj, senior scientist at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, said endogamy is the primary cause for population-specific diseases in India.

Tuhin Pandey takes charge as chairman of SEBI



MI News Service, New Delhi: Tuhin Kanta Pandey assumed charge as the 11th chairman of capital markets regulator Sebi. Pandey, a career bureaucrat who was serving as the Finance Secretary till now, was appointed chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) by the government.

He replaces Madhabi Puri Buch, whose three-year tenure ended on Friday. Buch, who is reportedly unwell, was not present when Pandey arrived. Dressed in a dark blue blazer and a striped shirt, Pandey arrived at the Sebi headquarters in the Bandra Kurla Complex business district. All four Sebi whole-time members, Ashwani Bhatia, Amarjeet Singh, Ananth Narayan and Kamlesh Varshney, welcomed Pandey at the Sebi headquarters. Pandey has been appointed Sebi chairman for three years.



On the occasion of the 190th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Maharajas presented the life of Thakur Ramakrishnadev through various religious programs, pujas, Narayana services and various speeches throughout the day. A lot of fair materials were present in and outside the Math premises and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission were decorated with books and various materials from various branch centers. Today, on his last day, there was a large gathering of devotees and the Maharajas played various musical instruments and various games on the birthday of Thakur. Their prayer is that we can be with Thakur throughout the year. May Thakur's blessings be showered on everyone, this is our sincere prayer to Thakur.

Arrested BKL terrorist planned terror attack during Mahakumbh: Police

MI News Service, Prayagraj: An "active terrorist" of Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) with "links" to Pakistan's ISI, who had planned a major terror attack during the Maha Kumbh, was arrested from Uttar Pradesh's Kaushambi district, police said. The terrorist, identified as Lajar Masih, was nabbed in a joint operation by Uttar Pradesh STF and Punjab Police. Addressing a press conference here, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Prashant Kumar said Masih had planned a major terrorist attack during the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

"However, due to intensive security checks at the religious gathering, he failed to execute his plan," he said. The Maha Kumbh was held at Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26. The DGP said, "Following the failed attempt, Masih had intended to flee India using a fake passport and take refuge in Portugal. He had links with a Babbar Khalsa operative who had already escaped to Dubai with forged travel documents". Masih, a resident of Kurliyan village in Amritsar, Punjab, had been in contact with three ISI agents in Pakistan.

He was previously jailed for arms and heroin smuggling but escaped from Guru Nanak Dev



Hospital, Amritsar, on September 24, 2024, while undergoing treatment, Kumar said.

"After his escape, he carried out a targeted shooting in Batala, Punjab, on October 23, 2024, at the behest of Swaran Singh alias Jeevan Fauji, the German-based chief of a BKI module. He then went into hiding in Sonapat and Delhi before resurfacing in Uttar Pradesh," he said. The DGP said the arrest of the terrorist also verifies smuggling of arms and drugs from Pakistan into India with the use of drones. Investigations revealed that Masih had been supplying grenades, which were

and extortion racket to fund terrorist activities. His links to the ISI were reportedly established through an inmate in Muktsar jail, where he was introduced to handlers involved in cross-border arms and narcotics smuggling using drones," DGP Kumar said.

The operation to nab the terrorist was carried out in the Kohraj police station area of Kaushambi. Additional Director General of Police (UP Special Task Force, Law and Order) Amitabh Yash said earlier in the day. Yash said the UP STF succeeded in recovering some explosives material and illegal arms from the terrorist. Among the seizures made are three active hand grenades, two active detonators, one foreign-made pistol and 13 cartridges of foreign make, the officer said.

Besides, a white coloured explosive powder, an Aadhaar card with a Ghaziabad address, one mobile phone without SIM card was also seized from his possession, he said.

"This terrorist had escaped judicial custody in Punjab on September 24, 2024," the ADG added. DGP Kumar said the arrest was a "major breakthrough in counter-terror operations", with further investigations underway to track down Masih's associates.

Experts see GST growth as sign of economic revival

MI News Service, New Delhi: Gross GST collections rose by 9.1 per cent to about Rs 1.84 lakh crore in February, boosted by domestic consumption and indicating potential economic revival. As per the official data released on Saturday, on a gross basis, mop up from Central GST stood at Rs 35,204 crore, State GST at Rs 43,704 crore, Integrated GST at Rs 90,870 crore and compensation cess of Rs 13,868 crore.

GST revenues from domestic transactions jumped 10.2 per cent to Rs 1.42 lakh crore while that from imports grew 5.4 per cent to Rs 41,702 crore during February. Total refunds issued during February were Rs 20,889 crore, a

17.3 per cent increase over the year-ago period. Net GST collections during February 2025 grew 8.1 per cent to about Rs 1.63 lakh crore. Gross and net GST revenues in February 2024 were Rs 1.68 lakh crore and Rs 1.50 lakh crore, respectively. The gross GST collections in February 2025, at Rs 1.84 lakh crore are, however, lower than Rs 1.96 lakh crore collected in January 2025. EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said the robust GST collection figures indicate that the Indian economy is withstanding global economic challenges. "The consistent rise in domestic GST revenue compared to import-related collections points to the effective implementa-

tion of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat policies. "Furthermore, the government's increased disbursement of domestic and export refunds, including those related to inverted duty structures, demonstrates its commitment to easing working capital pressures on businesses," Agarwal said. KPMG, Indirect Tax Head & Partner, Abhishek Jain said, "GST collections growth of 10.2 per cent on domestic supplies and overall growth of 9.1 per cent indicates a potential revival of economy for Q4.

If the Maha Kumbh effect comes into play, next month's revenue growth could be even better". Deloitte India Partner MS Mani said while GST collections in

large manufacturing and consuming states like Haryana, UP, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, MP, Karnataka have shown handsome increases in the range of 10-20 per cent, a detailed evaluation on the reasons for the low growth in the range of 1-4 per cent in Telangana, Gujarat, Assam, AP and Odisha could provide reasons on the factors responsible for growth in GST collections". Tax Connect Advisory Services LLP Partner Vivek Jalan said this year's GST collection is almost on target and that is one of the reasons for revised estimates pegging fiscal deficit for FY24-25 lower at 4.8 per cent, below the budgeted 4.9 per cent.

CBI requests info from US on pvt investigator's role in Bofors bribery scandal

MI News Service, New Delhi: The CBI has sent a judicial request to the United States seeking information from private investigator Michael Hershman, who had expressed willingness to share with Indian agencies crucial details about the Rs 64-crore Bofors bribery scandal of the 1980s, officials said. Hershman, head of the Fairfax Group, visited India in 2017 to attend a conference of private detectives.

During his stay, he appeared on various platforms, alleging that the investigation into the scam was derailed by the then Congress government and stated he was willing to share details with the CBI.

He had claimed in an interview that he was appointed by the Union Finance Ministry in 1986 for investigation of violation of currency control laws and money laundering by Indians abroad and tracking of such assets outside India and some of them pertained to the Bofors deal. The CBI also approached the Finance Ministry seeking documents pertaining to engagement of Hershman and if any report was submitted by him but the records of that time could not be furnished to the agency. The agency took note of Hershman's claims in several interviews and announced in 2017 that the matter would be investigated according to due process. The need for Letters Rotatory arose because

letters and reminders to the US authorities on November 8, 2023, December 21, 2023, May 13, 2024, and August 14, 2024, did not yield any information. A Letter Rogatory is a written request sent by the court of one country to the court of another country to obtain assistance in the investigation or prosecution of a criminal matter. The requests to the Interpol also did not yield any outcome. The CBI got a green signal from the Home Ministry on sending the LR to

the US on January 14 this year. The agency informed the Special Court, which cleared the LR application of the CBI on February 11.

"It is requested that in order to collect both documentary as well as oral evidence, for ascertaining the fact relating to the claims made by Michael Hershman, in the above-mentioned interview, it is necessary to conduct investigation in the United States of America," a special court had noted while clearing the CBI's application for the issuance of the LRs.

The CBI had registered the case in 1990, three years after a Swedish radio channel had alleged that bribes were paid by Bofors to politicians and defence officials of India to clinch the deal. The allegations created a big scandal for the Rajiv Gandhi government and have been used by rival parties to target the Congress.

The scam pertains to allegations of a Rs 64-crore bribe in a Rs 1,437-crore deal with Swedish firm Bofors for the supply of 400 155mm field Howitzers, which played a significant role in India's victory during the Kargil war. The CBI filed the charge sheets in 1999 and 2000. The Delhi High Court had exonerated Rajiv Gandhi in 2004, nearly 13 years after he was assassinated by the LTTE in a suicide attack. In 2005, the Delhi High Court quashed all charges against the remaining accused noting that the CBI failed to prove that the money transferred by Bofors to various agents by Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrocchi was meant to be paid as a bribe to public servants in India. The CBI appealed against the 2005 decision in the apex court in 2018 but it was dismissed on the grounds of delay. The Supreme Court, however, allowed it to raise all the points in an appeal filed by advocate Ajay Aggarwal in 2005.

Parl panel seeks note from telecom min on spectrum surrender reports



MI News Service, New Delhi: A parliamentary committee has sought a factual note from the Ministry of Communications on reports that its department of telecommunications allowed the surrender of spectrum acquired in auctions by telecom companies before 2022, sources said.

In its communication to the ministry, the committee headed by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey has mentioned a critical observation in the CAG report of 2015 related to the Communications and IT sector over the "lack of due diligence in auction of spectrum for Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) services", they said.

The CAG had observed that the Notice Inviting Applications for the BWA auction suffered from deficiencies in scope of usage of spectrum for different class of licencees.

The committee said the audit watchdog had noted that the UAS/CMTS (Unified Access Services/Cable Modem Termination System) and ISP (Internet

Service Provider) operators were allowed to bid for the same BWA spectrum while the usage of spectrum was governed by their respective licences.

The CAG said, "This led to post-auction demand by M/s Infotel for network codes which would have enabled them to provide voice services beyond the scope of their ISP licence. DoT facilitated the request by permitting them to migrate to Unified Licence after the auction." It added, "This migration, allowed at prices discovered in 2001, resulted in undue advantage of 3,367.29 crore to M/s Reliance Jio Infocomm (formerly M/s Infotel). It was also seen that even after four years of auction the roll out of BWA services has been negligible." Citing the CAG observations and some recent reports claiming that the department of telecommunications allowed the surrender of spectrum acquired in auctions by telecom companies before 2022, the panel has sought a factual note from the ministry.

Wolves & stray dogs make life hell for Bahraich villagers

MI News Service, Bahraich: After incidents of wolf attacks in Mahsi and, leopard and elephant threats in Katarniaghat, the residents of Bahraich are now facing the new menace of aggressive stray dogs. Over the past 10 days, one child has died and 14 people have been injured in dog attacks across several areas of the district. The situation has escalated to the extent that the administration is making public announcements via loudspeakers in the affected villages of Shivpur and Mahsi blocks, advising residents to carry sticks when stepping out in the evening. District Magistrate (DM) Monika Rani has issued an advisory instructing parents not to allow children to go outside alone. She has also warned officials of strict action in case of any recurrence of such attacks in their areas.

The administration has launched an awareness campaign across 192 villages to ed-

ucate residents about the threat. Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) Dr Rajesh Upadhyay told PTI on Thursday that the most severe incident occurred on February 24 in Shivpur block's Khairighat area.

"Pinki, a 12-year-old girl from Matera Kala village, was attacked by a pack of four-five stray dogs while cutting fodder in the fields after school. The dogs dragged her away and mauled her to death. Her severely mutilated body was later recovered by villagers," he said. Dr Upadhyay further reported that the worst-affected areas — Khairighat and Shivpur Bazar in Shivpur block and Sikandarpur in Mahsi block — have seen 14 dog attack cases in the past 10 days. All victims are receiving treatment in government hospitals.

The dogs have attacked livestock, with 81 injured animals receiving treatment. Over 6,000 pets and stray animals have



been vaccinated against rabies as a precautionary measure, he said. To control the situation, teams from the police, revenue, veterinary and block development departments are conducting awareness drives in 192 village councils. In severely affected areas, authorities are using e-rickshaws equipped with loudspeakers to spread awareness.

"A sterilisation drive is also underway, with 92 stray dogs sterilised so far, as neutering reduces aggression in dogs," Dr Upadhyay added.

A rabid dog was also found dead in Khairighat, confirming the presence of rabies among the strays. The DM held a high-level meeting on Wednesday to review measures to curb attacks by stray dogs and monkeys. She issued strict warnings to the municipal and veterinary officials, stating that repeated incidents would lead to punitive action. A survey of community health cen-

tre data has identified high-risk areas where targeted awareness campaigns are being conducted. Authorities have emphasised proper waste management to prevent strays from scavenging for food. The DM has also released contact numbers of responsible officials.

urging residents to report aggressive dogs or other problematic animals immediately. Dr Upadhyay advised citizens to remain cautious as this is the breeding season for dogs, making them naturally aggressive. "Sometimes, a dog's territorial instincts are triggered by unfamiliar scents on children who have played with other dogs. This can provoke attacks," he explained.

As a preventive measure, residents are advised to keep children away from stray dogs, properly dispose of animal carcasses to prevent scavenging and carry sticks when venturing out in the evening, he said.



KINDERGARTEN MISBEHAVIOUR MAY COST SOCIETY IN THE LONG RUN

WASHINGTON DC: For the first time, a new economic analysis has linked kindergarten pupils' misbehaviour to significant societal costs in terms of criminality, associated medical expenses, and lost productivity as they grow up.

"Providing effective, evidence-based programming designed to address behavioural problems early on has the potential to improve students' wellbeing in the long term," said project collaborator Damon Jones, associate research professor in the Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center (PRC). "This study implies that there could be an additional benefit of reduced need for government services and lower costs related to crime, where conduct problems are reduced."

Researchers reviewed teacher- and parent-reported data on conduct problems among more than 1,300 kindergarten students from two multi-site, longitudinal studies conducted in U.S. schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They used government and administrative data to determine the costs associated with crimes committed by the students through age 28. The team reported their results in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. The researchers found that increased behavioral problems -- such as oppositional or antisocial behavior -- in kindergarten students were linked to more than \$144,000 in costs, on average, per student related to crime and associated medical expenses and lost productivity as these children reached adolescence and adulthood.

"This study is the first to establish a connection between kindergarten students' behavior and crime-related costs when the children became adults," said Yoon Hur, assistant research professor at Penn State's Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative. Hur collaborated with Natalie Goulter, lecturer at Newcastle University, on statistical analyses for the study. Approximately 42 per cent of the students with increased behavioral problems had costs related to crimes involving violence, substance use, public order or property. Further, 45 per cent had costs related to government services use, 41 per cent had costs related to medical services use and 58 per cent had costs related to any of these categories.

"Data from studies such as these can be used by local, state and national governments to inform budget planning that could support prevention where early risk for conduct problems can be determined," Jones said. "Many studies have demonstrated that investing in young children through effective intervention can lead to economic benefits for people and public services over time."



People take pictures of tulips on the last day of the three-day Vasantotsav 2025 (Flower Exhibition) organised by Raj Bhawan, in Dehradun on Sunday. (ANI Photo)

Moral reasoning displays characteristic patterns in brain: Research

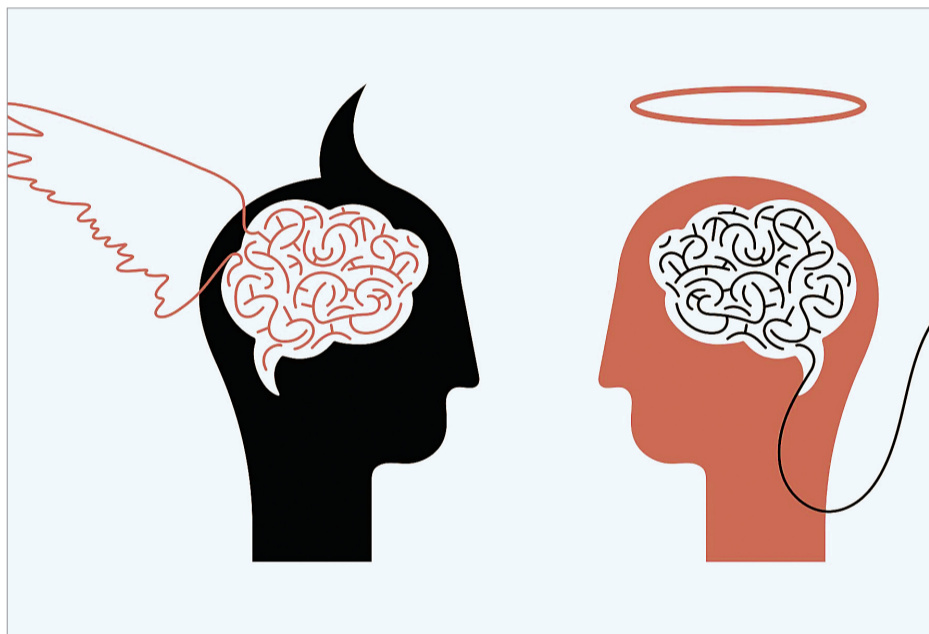
CALIFORNIA [US]: Every day, we come across situations that we believe to be wrong: a starving child, a dishonest politician, an unfaithful spouse, or a dishonest scientist. These instances draw attention to a number of moral issues, such as those involving fairness, loyalty, and compassion. But what links them all together?

Philosophers, psychologists and neuroscientists have passionately argued whether moral judgments share something distinctive that separates them from non-moral matters. Moral monists claim that morality is unified by a common characteristic and that all moral issues involve concerns about harm. Pluralists, in contrast, argue that moral judgments are more diverse in nature.

Fascinated by this centuries-old debate, a team of researchers set out to probe the nature of morality using one of moral psychology's most prolific theories. The group, led by UC Santa Barbara's René Weber, intensively studied 64 individuals via surveys, interviews and brain imaging on the wrongness of various behaviours.

They discovered that a general network of brain regions was involved in judging moral violations, like cheating on a test, in contrast with mere social norm violations, such as drinking coffee with a spoon. What's more, the network's topography overlapped strikingly with the brain regions involved in theory of mind. However, distinct activity patterns emerged at finer resolution, suggesting that the brain processes different moral issues along different pathways, supporting a pluralist view of moral reasoning. The results, published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, even reveal differences between how liberals and conservatives evaluate a given moral issue.

"In many ways, I think our findings clarify that monism and pluralism are not necessarily mutually exclusive



approaches," said first author Frederic Hopp, who led the study as a doctoral student in UC Santa Barbara's Media Neuroscience Lab. "We show that moral judgments of a wide range of different types of morally relevant behaviors are instantiated in shared brain regions."

That said, a machine-learning algorithm could reliably identify which moral category, or "foundation," a person was judging based on their brain activity. This is only possible because moral foundations elicit distinct neural activations," Hopp explained.

The group was guided by Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), a framework for explaining the origins and variation in human moral reasoning. "MFT predicts that humans possess a set of innate and universal moral foundations," Weber explained. These are generally organized into six categories:

Issues of care and harm, Concerns of fairness and cheating, Liberty versus oppression, Matters of loyalty and betrayal, Adherence to and subversion of authority, and sanctity versus degradation. The framework arranges these founda-

tions into two broad moral categories: care/harm and fairness/cheating emerge as "individualizing" foundations that primarily serve to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals. Meanwhile loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion and sanctity/degradation form "binding" foundations, which primarily operate at the group level.

Researchers created a model based on MFT to test whether the framework - and its nested categories - was reflected in neural activity. Sixty-four participants rated short descriptions of behaviours that violated a particular set of moral foundations, as well as behaviours that simply went against conventional social norms, which served as a control. An fMRI machine monitored activity across different regions of their brains as they reasoned through the vignettes. Certain brain regions distinguished moral from non-moral judgment across the board, such as activity in the medial prefrontal cortex, temporoparietal junction and posterior cingulate, among other regions. Participants also took longer to rate moral transgressions than

non-moral ones. The delay suggests that judging moral issues may involve a deeper evaluation of an individual's actions and how they relate to one's own values, the authors said.

"Although moral judgments are intuitive at first, deeper judgment requires responses to the six 'W' questions," said senior author Weber, director and lead researcher of UCSB's Media Neuroscience Lab, and a professor in the Departments of Communication and of Psychological and Brain Sciences. "Who does what, when, to whom, with what effect, and why. And this can be complex and takes time." Indeed, moral reasoning recruited regions of the brain also associated with mentalizing and theory of mind. The researchers also found that transgressions of loyalty, authority and sanctity prompted greater activity in regions of the brain associated with processing other people's actions, as opposed to the self. "It was surprising to us how well the organization into 'individualizing' versus 'binding' moral foundations is reflected on the neurological level in multiple networks," Weber said.

Next, the authors developed a decoding model that accurately predicted which specific moral foundation or social norm individuals were judging from fine-grained activity pattern across their brains. This would not have been possible if all moral categories were unified at the neurological level, they explained.

"This supports MFT's prediction that each moral foundation is not encoded in a single 'moral hotspot,'" the authors write, "but (is instead) instantiated via multiple brain regions distributed across the brain." This finding suggests that the distinct moral categories proposed by Moral Foundations Theory have an underlying neurological basis.

In this way, moral reasoning is similar to other mental tasks: it elicits characteristic patterns across the brain, with nuances based on the specifics. For instance, looking at pictures of houses and faces activates a brain region known as the ventral temporal cortex. "However, when looking at the pattern of activation in this region, one can clearly discern whether someone is looking at a house or a face," Hopp explained. Analogously, moral reasoning activates certain regions of the brain, "yet, the activation patterns in those same regions are highly distinct for different classes of moral behaviors, suggesting that they are not unified."

Far from merely an esoteric exercise, MFT provides a robust framework for understanding group identity and political polarization. Mounting evidence from survey and behavioral experiments suggests that liberals (progressives) are more sensitive to the categories of care/harm and fairness/cheating, which primarily protect the rights and freedoms of individuals. Conservatives, in contrast, place greater emphasis on the loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation categories, which generally operate at the group level.

CHINA'S ALIBABA RELEASES NEW AI MODEL THAT CLAIMS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS BETTER THAN RIVALS DEEPSEEK, OPENAI

WASHINGTON DC: Chinese e-commerce and tech giant Alibaba on Thursday unveiled a new artificial intelligence (AI) model, which it claims can rival DeepSeek to solve complex problems, but is better because it uses far less data for its operations

It said that its new compact reasoning model QwQ-32B is "comparable" to other larger cutting edge models such as OpenAI's o1-mini.

"Today, we release QwQ-32B, our new reasoning model with only 32 billion parameters, delivering performance comparable to other larger cutting edge models," a X post by the Alibaba Group founded by billionaire Jack Ma said.

Alibaba's AI model follows in the wake of another Chinese company DeepSeek, which had in January 2025 released its low-cost AI model that rivalled OpenAI's Chat GPT, a leader in the field of Artificial Intelligence.

Alibaba's new model is built on Qwen 2.5, its latest Artificial Intelligence language model, which is designed to handle text, images, and audio to analyse complex data, identify patterns and generate solutions, in ways that humans do.

The model, which was released on open source outperformed DeepSeek's R1, which boasts 671 billion parameters, in areas such as mathematics, coding and general problem-solving, according to a posting on the Qwen, the company's blog post on its AI models.

In layman's terms, there are three main types of AI models- supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning.

"Our research explores the scalability of Reinforcement Learning (RL) and its impact on enhancing the intelligence of large language models," the team looking after Alibaba AI models said.

"Furthermore, we have integrated agent-related capabilities into the reasoning model, enabling it to think critically while utilizing tools and adapting its reasoning based on environmental feedback," they said.

"These advancements not only demonstrate the transformative potential of RL but also pave the way for further innovations in the pursuit of artificial general intelligence," they added. The company said it is confident that in future it can be "combining stronger foundation models with RL powered by scaled computational resources" get closer to achieving Artificial General Intelligence (AGI).

Harvard University. "Grant and Blake provide a comprehensive review on the dietary and other factors that affect the risk of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Apart from the particular type of diet they demonstrate that the consumption of red meat, insulin resistance, obesity, reactive oxygen species, and oxidative stress, phytochemicals and homocysteine amongst other factors interact with neuroinflammation and play a major role in the aetiology of AD. This treatise provides an excellent overview of modifiable risk factors for AD."

Diet has significant impact on risk of Alzheimer's disease: Research

CALIFORNIA [US]: In a detailed study, researchers identify which diets are effective in lowering the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Findings were published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. Diet's Role in Modifying Risk of Alzheimer's Disease: History and Present Understanding.

The role of nutrition in lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease has been extensively studied. Plant-based diets, such as the Mediterranean diet and traditional Chinese, Japanese, and Indian cuisines, have been shown

to reduce risk, particularly when compared to the Western diet.

Alzheimer's disease rates rise in these countries as they make the nutrition transition to the Western diet. This study identifies dementia risk factors including higher consumption of saturated fats, meat, especially red meat such as hamburgers and barbeque as well as processed meats such as hot dogs, and ultra processed foods high in sugar and refined grains.

This review also lets us know why certain foods increase or reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease. For

example, meat raised risk of dementia the most by increasing risk factors such as inflammation, insulin resistance, oxidative stress, saturated fat, advanced glycation end products, and trimethylamine N-oxide. This study also outlines several foods that are protective against Alzheimer's disease, such as green leafy vegetables, colorful fruits and vegetables, legumes (like beans), nuts, omega-3 fatty acids, and whole grains.

Ultra processed foods can increase the risk of obesity and diabetes, themselves risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. Ultra

processed foods often lack the very ingredients found in whole plant foods that keep dementia away, such as anti-inflammatory components and antioxidants. Poverty is an important driver of Alzheimer's disease in the US since ultra processed foods and meat are cheaper sources of energy than fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other more nutritious foods, thus promoting obesity.

The paper also suggests that Alzheimer's disease rates in the US are projected to increase by 50% from 2018 levels by 2038. This calculation is based on com-

paring trends of obesity in the US with Alzheimer's disease trends. This comparison shows a 20-year lag between obesity rates and Alzheimer's disease rates. This estimate is very close to the estimate published by the Alzheimer's Association in 2018, an estimate of a 56% increase. Our estimate suggests that the rising trend of obesity, due to consumption of meat and ultra processed foods, is the force driving dementia. Although our personal risk of Alzheimer's disease can be reduced with diet, it is expected that those who continue to eat the Western

diet will continue to have a higher risk.

"Grant and Blake comprehensively review and synthesize the role of dietary factors in Alzheimer's disease. Evidence from diverse perspectives support that a diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, whole grains, and...de-emphasizes meat, especially red meat, saturated fats, and ultra-processed foods is associated with lower risk of Alzheimer's disease. Physical inactivity and obesity also contribute to higher risk. In addition, the dietary and lifestyle patterns associ-

ated with higher risk of Alzheimer's disease are known to affect the constellation of mechanisms believed to increase risk, including inflammation, insulin resistance and oxidative stress, among others. Grant and Blake make a strong case that, while further research is needed to better understand the mechanisms, diet and lifestyle factors linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers are likely to influence risk of Alzheimer's disease."

Edward Giovannucci, MD, ScD, Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology,

Harvard University. "Grant and Blake provide a comprehensive review on the dietary and other factors that affect the risk of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Apart from the particular type of diet they demonstrate that the consumption of red meat, insulin resistance, obesity, reactive oxygen species, and oxidative stress, phytochemicals and homocysteine amongst other factors interact with neuroinflammation and play a major role in the aetiology of AD. This treatise provides an excellent overview of modifiable risk factors for AD."

UP mosque loud-speaker seized, Imam booked for violating noise pollution limits

MI News Service, Lucknow: Police have registered a case against an imam and seized a loud-speaker from a mosque in the Chandausi area of Sambhal district for allegedly using it for 'azaan' at a volume exceeding the prescribed decibel limits. According to an official statement, the action was taken on Saturday night at a mosque in the Punjabhiyan locality, where 'azaan' or 'call to prayer' was played at a volume violating the prescribed limits set by the court. "A case has been registered against Hafiz Shakeel Shamsi, the imam of the mosque, under Sections 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), and 270 (public nuisance) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000. The loudspeaker has been seized, and legal proceedings are underway," the statement said.



A vendor sells herbal coloured powder at his shop, ahead of Holi festival, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

Historic Isa-le-Sawab in Furfura concludes with the sound of tears

Nurul Islam Khan

Sunday morning was the last day of the great Isa-le-Sawab of Furfura Sharif. It is said that the word Allah was shining like a single white thread, piercing the deep silence of the morning and the blue sky. All around was only the sound of tears, "the great Lord forgive me". Amen, Amen was being heard in millions of voices. Pray to the great Allah for the forgiveness of millions of people. It went without saying that the sound echoing throughout the vast area of Furfura Sharif gave a different feeling to the entire environment. On Sunday, everyone concluded the historic great Isa-le-Sawab of Furfura Sharif. It is estimated by various quarters that more or less 5 million people attended this 134-year-old mahfil. The meeting began on Thursday. Although the three-day meeting started from the main Darbar Sharif, its breadth and depth covered several kilometers. Although the crowd at the meeting on the first day was a little less, the crowd on the streets was huge. The Isale Sawab held in Furfura Sharif in the month of Ramadan was a new experience for many. Even the critics expressed hope that there would be no crowd at the meeting. It is worth saying that the explosion of devotees at the meeting, which shattered that flimsy excuse, has actually kept the tradition of Furfura intact. Lakhs of vehicles had entered. Only the heads of people had crossed several kilometers. This amazing crowd of people



started on Saturday morning. The crowd of people increased as the day progressed. People from non-Muslim families standing on the streets handed over drinking water, and dates to the religious people who had come to attend the Isa-le-Sawab mahfil. A rare example of harmony was seen. The presence of common people in the five daily prayers was worth seeing. In the evening, the Pir Sahib family was busy to serve the fasting people and provide them with iftar. As a result, there was satisfactory hospitality in the court of the five Huzours. The service of numerous Pir Sahibs in delivering dinner or Sahari to them was commendable. Donations from people for orphan students, medical services, book stalls and other forms of charity were in a new role. After Saturday night, lakhs of people occupied the entire area. To be honest, there was no place to keep steps on the ground. Government aid played an excep-

tional role this time. Administrative officials played a role in beautification this time. Government buses and garages were also used as centers for journalists of the district. Pir Hazrat Abdullah Siddiqui offered his last prayers from the Darbar Sharif on this day. The meeting of the Zikr was conducted by Pirzada Maulana Sawban Siddiqui. Many Pirsahabs including Pirzada Ammar Siddiqui, Maulana Azmat Siddiqui joined the last prayers. Prayers were offered for the welfare of the people of the entire world. The message of peace and harmony was given. Prayers were offered for Palestine and innocent people. In the meeting organized by Hazrat Pir Dada Huzur, the focus of the people was on visiting his shrine, offering prayers in the mosque. People also came forward to help the poor and orphan children. In every way, the great Isa-le-Sawab was a picture of self-purification.

Centre's Waqf Act amendment aims to stir Hindu-Muslim narrative: Shiv Sena (UBT) MP

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Centre's intentions to amend the Waqf Act are not good and it wants to set a "Hindu-Muslim narrative" in the country through it, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant has claimed. In an interview to PTI, Sawant, who was a member of the Joint Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, also accused the parliamentary panel chief, BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, of adopting "deceptive practices" and not holding a clause-by-clause discussion on the proposed law as mentioned in its agenda. He also dubbed the functioning of the panel dictatorial. The bill aims to streamline the registration of Waqf properties, besides preventing their misuse. The bill is likely to come up before Parliament during the second part of the session -- scheduled to be held from March 10 to April 4. The 10 opposition members in the panel of 31 were suspended in January following a ruckus over scheduling of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. That itself shows the dictatorial functioning of the panel's chairman who was being guided by BJP leaders to conduct the business of the committee, Sawant alleged. "The intentions of the government are not good. They want to set a narrative in this country and they are doing it consistently and making a fool of the people," the former Union minister claimed. "The government is trying to set a Hindu-Muslim narrative and that it is here to protect the Hindus. You protect the interests of Hindus. We too are doing that. To protect the interest of Hindus does not mean (one has) to create hatred (towards) other people," Sawant said.

Pak: Sindh Ex CM's son declared dead despite being alive

MI News Service, Khairpur: In a shocking revelation, Pakistan's Former Chief Minister of Sindh Qaim Ali Shah's son, Liaquat Ali Shah was declared dead in official records, despite being alive, ARY News reported. As per ARY News report on Saturday, Health Department officials, including the Secretary Health, DG Health, and Additional Health Secretary, submitted a false report to the court, claiming Liaquat Ali Shah's demise. A death certificate was also provided to mislead the court. Currently serving as the in-charge of the government eye hospital in Khairpur on a contract basis, Liaquat Ali Shah is accused of illegally recruiting over 161 employees of his choice during his tenure as District Health Officer (DHO), as per ARY News. Meanwhile, a policeman was found dead at Liaquat Ali Shah's residence in Karachi, ARY News reported on February 10. According to police, the cop was found dead from a home within the remits of Darakhshan police station and after an initial inquiry, it emerged that the house was owned by the son of PPP leader and ex-chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah. "The policeman used to live in the quarters at the home," they said and added that the body has been shifted to a hospital for post-mortem. Liaquat Ali Shah while responding to the incident said that he had rented out the place to the cop and did not know about the circumstances that led to his death. Later, ASP Darakhshan police station Rana Dilawar said that the death of the cop apparently seems to be natural after it emerged that he died after getting fits. In a similar incident, although it did not involve a cop, Nazim Jokhio's body was recovered from the PPP lawmaker Jam Awais's farmhouse in December.

1,000 dead in 2 days of clashes between security forces & Assad's supporters in Syria

MI News Service, Syria: More than 1,000 people died in two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and allied forces and supporters of ousted President Bashar Assad, DW reported a war monitoring group as stating. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported deaths in more than 20 locations across the Latakia, Tartus, and Hama governorates, marking one of the deadliest episodes in Syria's 14-year conflict, as per DW. It stated that, in addition to 745 civilians killed, mostly in close-range shootings, 125 government security force members and 148 militants affiliated with Assad were killed, as per DW.



The Observatory noted that most of the civilians killed were from the country's Alawite religious minority. Syria's interim government on Saturday sent reinforcements to coastal cities in the country's northwest where security forces have been engaged in heavy battles with fighters loyal to former ruler Bashar al-Assad, as per Al Jazeera. Security forces on Saturday said they had regained control of much of the areas in Tartus and Latakia governorates, where al-Assad loyalists carried out co-ordinated attacks at checkpoints, security convoys and military positions on Thursday, as per Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, quoting Syria's state news agency SANA, stated that an unidentified security official as saying that after the attacks, numerous people went to the coastal areas seeking revenge for the assault on government security forces. The official said the actions "led to some individual violations

and we are working on stop them". A curfew remains in effect in Latakia and other coastal areas that are predominantly home to al-Assad's minority Alawite sect and make up his long-time base of support, per Al Jazeera. Amid the ongoing fighting, dozens of civilians and members of the former regime and their families have taken shelter at the Russian Khmeimim base in the Latakia countryside.

In his first public comments since the surge in violence, Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa on Friday called on the fighters to lay down their weapons and surrender "before it is too late", Al Jazeera reported.

Israel to send negotiating team to Qatar amid ceasefire talks

MI News Service, Tel Aviv: Israel will send a negotiating team to Doha in Qatar on Monday, The Times of Israel reported, quoting a statement from the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Office. "Israel agreed to the invitation of the mediators backed by the US, and will send a delegation to Doha on Monday in an attempt to make progress in the negotiations," according to the PMO, as per The Times of Israel. The development comes after Arabic media reports that Hamas has indicated it is willing to agree to a temporary extension of the Gaza ceasefire over Ramadan. An Israeli official told The Times of Israel that there is no particular progress in the talks that led to a decision and denies the reports that Hamas agreed to a Ramadan ceasefire extension. Hamas says it sees "positive indicators" for the start of talks on a second phase of the truce and denies reports it has signalled an openness to a temporary ceasefire instead of an end to Israel's war.

Four European powers and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) endorsed an Egyptian proposal for Gaza's reconstruction that counters Trump's expulsion proposal. Israeli forces continued their offensive in the occupied West Bank, opening fire on people in the town of Dura, south of Hebron, as Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians in the Masafer Yatta area, Al Jazeera reported.

Ethiopian Airlines marks Int'l Women's Day with 6 all-women-functioned flight



MI News Service, Addis Ababa: Africa's leading carrier Ethiopian Airlines said on Saturday in a press release that it has operated all-women functioned flights to six destinations across four continents to mark International Women's Day, which falls on March 8.

The Ethiopian flag carrier held a special ceremony on Friday honoring women's contribution to the aviation industry. The event, which brought together senior Ethiopian government officials, diplomats based in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, and women staff of Ethiopian Airlines, was marked by six flights entirely managed by women, from catering, maintenance, and check-in to lounge services and flight operations. The all-women-functioned flights departed from Addis Ababa for Athens in Greece, New Delhi in India, Windhoek in Namibia, Sao Paulo in Brazil, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and Bahir Dar in northern Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Minister of Women and Social Affairs Ergovie Tesfaye said during the occasion that Ethiopian Airlines has become a major institution where women have proven their mettle. She praised the "dedicated" women professionals working across various aviation fields for their

"significant contribution" to the continuous growth of Ethiopia's national carrier, thereby enhancing the East African country's reputation on the international stage. Tesfaye said International Women's Day serves as a call to action toward preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, while also tackling the complex economic, social, and political challenges they face.

She called for a renewed commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring women's meaningful participation as a critical enabler for achieving inclusive and sustainable national development. According to the Ethiopian flag carrier, the all-women-functioned flights showcase a significant milestone in the airline's ongoing efforts to elevate the presence and participation of women in the aviation industry. It said the initiative envisages a dual aim of acknowledging women aviation experts and inspiring future generations of women in the aviation sector. Noting that women currently make up about 40 percent of Ethiopian Airlines' workforce across a range of business divisions, the airline said women aviation professionals are "significantly contributing their share to Ethiopian Airlines' overall achievements and development."

Balochistan: Families of forcibly disappeared victims stage protest on Quetta-Taftan highway

MI News Service, Balochistan: Families of 10 Baloch individuals who were forcibly disappeared by Pakistan security forces have staged a sit-in protest by blocking the Quetta-Taftan Highway (N-40) at Kardgap cross in district Mastung, the Baloch Yakjehti Committee has stated. The BYC said that amid the spike in extrajudicial killings, the families of the missing people's ones have seen their loved ones getting killed.

In a post on X, Baloch Yakjehti Committee stated, "Amidst surge in extrajudicial killings - fake encounters and dumped mutilated bodies - the victim families of 10 enforcedly disappeared Baloch individuals have blocked the Quetta - Taftan Highway (N-40) at Kardgap cross in district Mastung. The forcibly disappeared persons are natives of Tehsil Kardgap and belong to the Sarparrah tribe. The families witnessed that their loved ones



were illegally abducted and disappeared by the Law Enforcement and Intelligence personnel." BYC mentioned the list of the disappeared which include individuals from different years, with some cases dating back as far as 2011.

Among them are Shah Nawaz Sarparrah, who was taken on April 4, 2024, and Zakir Ahmed Sarparrah, who disappeared on August 30, 2021. Other victims include Ghulam Farooq Sarparrah, ab-

ducted in June 2015, and Abdul Malik Sarparrah, who vanished in August 2011. In addition to these ongoing cases, BYC highlighted that a new enforced disappearance has emerged. Aqil Jalil, a 25-year-old medical technician, was abducted on March 7, 2025, from his shop in front of the Sarikoran police station in Panjgur. His abduction took place at 5:00 PM, and BYC highlighted that state-backed death squads were responsible

for the act. The families are demanding justice and accountability for the disappearance of their loved ones. They are calling for immediate action from the authorities to locate the missing individuals and end the cycle of abductions that has devastated their community. The protest continues as a powerful statement against the state's role in the ongoing disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Balochistan.



Khelo India Winter Games: Army, Ladakh set to renew rivalry as second leg commences in Gulmarg

GULMARG : The second leg of the Khelo India Winter Games 2025 will commence on Sunday at the picturesque Kongdoori slopes here. The Indian Army will aim to wrest control from the first-leg winners, the Union Territory of Ladakh, to defend their overall title in the prestigious tournament.

Previously, UT of Ladakh finished on top in the first chapter, winning 7 medals, including four gold, followed by Tamil Nadu with five medals, including three gold. Maharashtra finished with the maximum number of medals (10), but only two gold meant they finished third.

A total of 350-plus athletes from 11 states, two Union Territories and central forces Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) will be competing in four disciplines Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, Ski Mountaineering and Snowboarding as the Winter Games resume after postponement due to insufficient snowfall in February, a release said.

Wasim Bhat, an Alpine Skiing athlete from Jammu & Kashmir, feels the adrenaline-pumping sport has taught him to be fearless.

"Khelo India Winter Games are bringing focus on top athletes and performers of Jammu and Kashmir as well as athletes across the country. The mountains of Kashmir have taught me to be fearless and adaptable. I am excited to put my skills to the test in the Khelo India Winter Games starting from Sunday and make J&K proud," Wasim told SAI Media.

Capt. Amit Kapoor, Ski Mountaineering athlete from Delhi, admitted that the mental toughness of winter sports athletes is exemplary and that makes a competition like Khelo India Winter Games unique.

"The Khelo India Winter Games, held since the year 2020, have come a long way. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the competition has brought the athletes to Jammu and Kashmir, the winter sports capital of India, which has hosted all the Winter Games held in the country so far. Ski mountaineering is about endurance, skill, and mental toughness. Tackling the slopes of Gulmarg may be tough, but the strength and resilience of the athletes participating in the Khelo India Winter Games is exemplary," he said.

National Games gold medalist Vakar Ahmad Lone, a snowboarding athlete from J&K, said that the Winter Games gave the local talent an international-level platform to showcase their skills.



CT 2025: Daryl Mitchell's fine ICC white-ball knockouts run continues against India in final

Dubai : New Zealand all-rounder Daryl Mitchell continued his string of fine scores in ICC white-ball knockout matches, but registered some unfortunate records due to the sluggish nature of his knock.

During the title clash against India, Mitchell walked in on the crease with the score at 69/2 in 10.1 overs. He held one end steady and scored 63 in 101 balls, with three half-centuries. His runs came at a strike rate of 62.38.

In six ICC white-ball knockout matches, Mitchell has made 382 runs at an average of 95.50 and a strike rate of 110.08, with a century and three fifties. His best score is 134, which came against India in the semifinal of the 2023 World Cup at Wankhede Stadium.

His other standout performances include

72* off 47 balls against England in the T20 World Cup 2021 semifinals, 53* in 35 balls against Pakistan in the T20 World Cup 2022 semifinals and 49 in 37 balls against South Africa in the 2025 CT semifinals.

His 11 runs against Australia in the T20 WC 2021 final is his only big failure in the knockouts.

Against India in 10 matches and eight innings, Mitchell has made 389 runs at an average of 48.62, with two centuries and a fifty. His best score is 134.

However, the 91 balls taken by Mitchell to complete his fifty makes it the second slowest for New Zealand in ODIs since 2011, the second slowest for New Zealand in the Champions Trophy.

New Zealand won the toss and opted to bat first.

Kiwis got off to a fine start with a 57-run stand between Will Young (15) and Rachin Ravindra (37 in 29 balls, with four boundaries and a six). However, Kuldeep Yadav (2/40) applied some breaks and reduced NZ to 75/3.

A 57-run stand between Daryl Mitchell (63 in 101 balls, with three fours) and Michael Bracewell pushed Kiwis towards 150-plus runs. Bracewell played a fine hand of 53* in 40 balls, with three fours and two sixes, taking NZ to 251/7 in their 50 overs.

Kuldeep (2/40) and Varun Chakravarty (2/45) were the top wicket-takers for India. Mohammed Shami also took a wicket, but conceded 74 runs in his nine overs.



ISL: Chennaiyin FC aim for strong finish against Jamshedpur FC

Chennai : Chennaiyin FC will be aiming to finish the Indian Super League 2024-25 regular season strongly as they welcome Jamshedpur FC to the Marina Arena on Sunday.

Chennaiyin have a positive head-to-head record against Jamshedpur across their 15 meetings in the Indian Super League, winning seven and drawing five.

Their previous clash this season yielded a 5-1 triumph for the Marina Machans, their biggest of the season. Back home, Chennaiyin will look to add to that tally and finish the regular league season positively to build momentum for the Super Cup.

Addressing the media at the pre-match conference ahead of the clash, head coach Owen Coyle praised Jamshedpur head coach Khalid Jamil and expressed his anticipation for the game.

"I like Khalid (Jamil). Since he has come into the league, I have found him a very good coach. I remember him going to NorthEast and doing very well. I like him and have huge respect for him. Khalid has managed to take Jamshedpur into the playoffs, so tremendous credit to him. We know they are tough opponents, we're looking forward to the game. We went there earlier, and that was one of our better performances this season. We showed what we can do, and we want to get to that same level tomorrow. We want to win and set ourselves up for a big Super Cup to come," said Coyle, according to ISL release.

Joining Coyle for the press conference was attacker Farukh Choudhary, one of two Chennaiyin FC players called up by the Indian national team for the upcoming matches against Maldives and Bangladesh-the other being Irfan Yadwad.

Commenting on the season and his selection, Farukh said, "Individually, we have been inconsistent this season. If we were consistent, we would have managed a lot more points. That's the first part when I look at myself. Secondly, it's always good to have coaches who believe in players, like gaffer (Coyle) here, he's always behind me to back me up. Similarly, when I went for the last two national camps, I think I did decently, scored a goal, and played as a number 10 in one instance, maybe that is why he (Manolo Marquez) has picked me back again."

"Nothing like that now...": Gill dismisses speculations of Rohit's retirement



DUBAI : Ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 final against New Zealand at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday, Team India's vice-captain Shubman Gill has given an update on whether the Men in Blue skipper Rohit Sharma is retiring or not from the 50-over format after the completion of marquee event.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Gill stated that no conversations regarding Rohit's future had taken place in the dressing room or with him

personally. "No discussion in the dressing room or with me--even Rohit bhai would be thinking about the Champions Trophy final, like all of us. So, nothing like that now," he said.

According to Gill, Rohit might make a decision after the final: "I think once the match ends tomorrow, he will make a decision. There is no talk about it within the setup." With India eyeing another major ICC title, Rohit Sharma's experience and leadership will be

key as they take on a determined New Zealand side in the high-stakes clash.

India is undefeated in the tournament so far, and the Kiwis have looked rock solid with bat and ball under Mitchell Santner's captaincy.

The clash promises to be an epic sequel to the 2000 ICC Champions Trophy final, which New Zealand won. Men in Blue would like to avenge losses to the Blackcaps in the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup semifinal and 2021 ICC World Test Championship final.

India claimed last week's contest against the Kiwis by 44 runs, after posting 249 runs from their 50 overs and restricting New Zealand to 205 runs all out in the 46th over. While there's been a lot of focus on spin bowlers stepping up in the UAE, it was Matt Henry who starred with the ball for the Black Caps, claiming 5/42 off eight overs, in an innings where Shreyas Iyer top-scored for India with a 79 off 98 balls.

Kane Williamson fought valiantly for the Kiwis with an 81 (120 balls), but couldn't find support in the middle order. India's spinners combined for nine wickets, led by 'secret weapon' Varun Chakravarty, taking 5/42 - coincidentally the exact figures as Henry for the Kiwis - in what was just the 33-year-old leg-spinner's second One Day International.

India Masters enter IML 2025 semifinals; beat West Indies Masters in last-over thriller

RAIPUR : India Masters gave final touches to their preparations for the semifinals of the International Masters League (IML) 2025 as they registered a spectacular seven-run win against West Indies Masters to kick off the final leg of the tournament in Raipur on Saturday.

The home side rode Stuart Binny's three-wicket burst and a smart final over from Irfan Pathan to get over the line in the high-scoring thriller.

The stage was set for a nostalgic showdown, rekindling one of cricket's most legendary rivalries--Sachin Tendulkar vs Brian Lara. While the Indian icon was rested, the contest still lived up to its billing, delivering a captivating blend of nostalgia and exhilarating action. India Masters set the tone with a commanding batting display, spearheaded by blistering half-centuries from Ambati Rayudu and Saurabh Tiwary, before Yuvraj Singh's late-order fireworks propelled them to an imposing 253/3.

Under stand-in skipper Yuvraj Singh, the home side took first strike after Lara won the toss, sending them in. And as the new opening pair of Ambati Rayudu (63) and Saurabh Tiwary (60) took their stances against the bustling run-up of Dwayne Smith, the match took on a different hue -- not of old foes reliving their battles, but of a new set of veterans



stepping up to continue the legacy in front of a sizeable weekend crowd led by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium here.

India's innings began with purpose as Rayudu and Tiwary successfully countered the movement on a pitch with a slight tinge of green. After receiving a reprieve early on, Rayudu, in particular, took the attack to the West Indies Masters, dealing in boundaries and showing no mercy to the spin duo of Ashley Nurse and Suleiman Benn to bring up a blistering half-century in just 30 balls.

However, just as Rayudu looked set to run away with the game, Benn struck back, breaking the stellar 94-run opening stand with the wicket of Rayudu, whose

35-ball knock was laced with eight fours and four sixes. Meanwhile, Tiwary remained steady at the crease and went on to slam a half-century in 32 balls. In the process, his 79-run second wicket partnership with Gurkeerat Singh Mann (46) continued to build momentum at a rapid pace, propelling India Masters past 150 by the 14th over. There was no respite for the West Indies Masters as Gurkeerat took the attack to Jonathan Carter, smashing him for two towering sixes and a boundary. However, Carter had his revenge, dismissing Gurkeerat just four runs short of a well-deserved half-century. The over could have been even more fruitful for the bowler had Lendl Simmons not put down Tiwary on 52. The left-handed Tiwary tried to make the most of

his reprieve, dispatching Jerome Taylor for a six, but his attempt to accelerate further proved costly as he perished to the same bowler after slamming seven boundaries and two maximums. Towards the end, Yuvraj wasted no time in stamping his authority with a 20-ball unbeaten 49, and the brutal assault resulted in an undefeated 67-run stand with Yusuf Pathan (14 not out), that helped India to the mammoth total.

In response, West Indies Masters matched India's aggression with an explosive start. Dwayne Smith (79) and William Perkins (52) launched a fierce counterattack, slamming destructive fifties and forging a menacing 121-run opening stand. But just when the visitors looked in control, Binny's introduction turned the tide, his crucial breakthroughs derailing the chase and steering India Masters to a memorable victory. With the dew settling in, Smith, who brought up his half-century in just 22 balls, went on to plunder Irfan Pathan for 20 runs in an over before Perkins joined the onslaught by launching left-arm spinner Pawan Negi over long-on to bring up his own fifty off just 23 deliveries. However, the breakthrough finally arrived on the very next ball, as Negi held on to a towering return catch to dismiss the wicketkeeper-batter, bringing an end to the destructive stand.

IPL 2025: Matthew Wade returns to Gujarat Titans as assistant coach

GUJARAT : Former Australia wicketkeeper batter Matthew Wade has returned to the Gujarat Titans (GT) for the cash-rich Indian Premier League 2025, this time as an assistant coach.

The former southpaw has joined the franchise's support staff, which includes Ashish Nehra (head coach), Parthiv Patel (batting coach), Aashish Kapoor, and Narendra Negi (assistant coaches).

As a player, Wade represented GT in 12 matches over two seasons and amassed 161 runs. Wade announced his retirement from international cricket in October last year, bringing the

curtain down on his career, which spanned over 13 years and 225.

The 37-year-old featured for his country at three editions of the T20 World Cup, with his most memorable achievement coming in 2021 when he helped guide Australia to their inaugural 20-over title in Dubai in his role as vice-captain.

Wade starred at that tournament, with his innings of 41* from just 17 deliveries in a thrilling semi-final victory over Pakistan among his many career highlights.

The keeper-batter also made 36 Test appearances for Australia, scoring 1,613 runs



with four Test centuries and five fifties at an average of 29.87, with a career-best score of 117 coming in the fifth Ashes Test against England at The Oval in 2019.

He also played 97 ODIs, scoring 1,867 runs in 83 innings at an average of 26.29, with a century and 11 fifties. In 92 T20Is, he scored 1,202 runs at an average of 26.03, with a strike rate of 134.15. He scored three half-centuries in the format, with the best score of 80.

Gujarat Titans IPL 2025 Squad:
Batters: Shubman Gill (retained), Sai Sudharsan (retained), Rahul Tewatia

(retained), Sherfane Rutherford

Wicketkeepers: Jos Buttler, Kumar Kushagra, Anuj Rawat
All-rounders: Rashid Khan (spin; retained), Washington Sundar (spin), M Shahrulkh Khan (spin; retained), Mahipal Lomror (spin), Nishant Sindhu (spin), Arshad Khan (pace), Jayant Yadav (spin), Glenn Phillips (spin), Karim Janat (pace)

Spinners: Manav Suthar, Sai Kishore

Fast bowlers: Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj, Prasadh Krishna, Gerald Coetzee, Gurnoor Brar, Ishant Sharma, Kulwant Khejroliya.